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Plato's Protagoras

Essays on the Confrontation of Philosophy and Sophistry

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Plato's Protagoras

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Introduction

Olof Pettersson

Guided by the bold ambition to reexamine the nature of philosophy, questions about the foundations and origins of Plato's dialogues have in recent years gained a new and important momentum. In the wake of the seminal work of Andrea Nightingale and especially her book *Genres in Dialogue* from 1995, Plato's texts have come to be reconsidered in terms of their compositional and intergeneric fabric. Supplementing important research on the argumentative structures of the dialogues, it has been argued that Plato's philosophizing cannot be properly assessed without considering its intellectual debts. By detailed examinations of the practical, generic and textual origins of the dialogues, it has been shown how Plato's chosen form of philosophical inquiry is deeply influenced by traditional forms of poetry, rhetoric, sophistry, and even medicine (e.g. McCoy 2008; Fagan 2013; Tell 2011; Levin 2014).

On this view, the reasons why Plato decided to write in this way are complex and diverse, but one shared and uncontested premise is that the dialogue form allowed him to discuss and scrutinize the intellectual tendencies of his day and age in a way that other literary forms could not (Destrée and Herrmann 2011; Peterson 2011). The dialogue made it possible for Plato to internalize rival types of authoritative discourse into his philosophical project without committing it to their claims and principles (Frede 1992; Nightingale 1995. Cf. Long 2013).

In stressing this point, contemporary research is however faced with a problem that has played a less prominent role in traditional scholarship: Even if it may seem reasonable to suppose that Plato's attempt to introduce and vindicate a new type of intellectual practice – called philosophy – required proleptic strategies and deep knowledge of the traditions whose authority he wanted to challenge, these strategies

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have proven to be notoriously difficult to separate from the target of his supposed critique. Insofar as we acknowledge that Plato's dialogues are full of non-philosophical voices, we must also ask where, exactly, the lines are to be drawn. Where does the substantial contribution of philosophy begin and where is Plato merely entertaining an argument for the sake of its refutation? Although Plato's attitude towards rhetoric, for example, is as explicit as it is harsh, his own dialogues are not only rhetorical masterpieces in all senses of the word. It is also clear that even philosophically direct dialogues, such as the *Apology*, are written in a way that makes it impossible to think that they are composed without a profound influence by Athens' politico-forensic practice and its established rhetorical traditions.

One question, in relation to which this issue has proven to be significantly difficult to untangle, concerns the difference between philosophy and sophistry. At a first glance the philosopher and the sophist may seem to be each other's opposites. While the philosopher is poor, devoted to virtue, cares only for the soul and talks with the voice of blunt honesty, the sophist sells his teachings for a profit, cares more for his reputation than for his soul and deceives his fellow men with his clever tongue. At a closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the differences are not that easy to determine. Even if Plato's attitude is generally hostile, some sophists turn out to care a lot for virtue; and Socrates, the philosopher, is quite a clever speaker himself. Like the wolf and the dog, it seems, they are not always that easy to tell apart.

To fully understand the tension in Plato's account of sophistry, there are, of course, many factors to consider. Besides Plato's own explicit arguments, and his rich and complex portraits of historical figures such as Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias or Thrasymachus, there is however one additional factor that may turn out to be important. Plato's derogatory attitude may hide a deep intellectual debt. However indigestible it may seem, there are good reasons to doubt that the method of short questions and answers, that we have come to know as the mark of Socratic questioning, was a Platonic novelty. Instead, crucial parts of what Plato eternalized in the dialogue form may just as well have been a living and well-established sophistic practice (Frede 1992, xv). If this is true, what we generally consider to be Socratic questioning and a distinct and important characteristic of Plato's philosophical methodology is better described as an eloquent adaptation of an already influential and broadly acknowledged form of intellectual activity. And it is thus not ultimately clear if this method can be called philosophy at all. To distinguish the authentic voice of philosophy, it seems, we must look deeper.

Here, Plato's dialogue the *Protagoras* stands out as particularly important. In the guise of an intellectual competition between Protagoras and Socrates, this dialogue is often seen as the great showdown between philosophy and sophistry. While Protagoras teaches virtue for a fee and promises to make his students better every day, Socrates begins by denying that virtue can be taught, and questions the edificatory effects of the sophist's teachings. Supposedly meant to mark the difference between the philosopher and his rival, the dialogue sets out as a warning. Even if he admittedly does not know what it involves, Socrates explains that sophistry may be deceptive. In carefully weighed words, addressed to the young and somewhat

confused Hippocrates, Socrates says that without knowledge of what is good for the health of the soul, getting involved with sophists may not be worth the price.

Despite the fact that this opening may seem to suggest that Socrates and his young friend should remain in the security of their own conversation, this, of course, is not what happens. Whatever risks it may involve, they go and talk to the sophist. And as soon as Protagoras is allowed to explain himself, the distinctions are blurred. As it turns out, the sophist is a much more complex and morally interesting character than the dialogue's introductory conversation may seem to suggest. Not only does he want to foster virtue. He also encourages moral integrity and defends the importance of self-evaluation. Instead of exploiting this character to emphasize Socrates' unique devotion to virtue and philosophy's role in the task of becoming a better person, Plato presents a nuanced picture. Protagoras, in Gregory Vlastos' famous words from 1956, "has moral inhibitions", and while the sophist explains that his words are not just said for the sake of the argument, but "having regarded also the whole of [his] life" (Vlastos 1956), the moral depth of his teachings shines through: Protagoras, for example, both "refuses to admit that injustice is compatible with sôphrosunê [and to] identify a life of pleasure with the good life" (Vlastos 1956).

Although there may be many different reasons why Plato decided to characterize Protagoras in this way, it is reasonably clear that he is not out to make things simple. Even if Protagoras may charge a fee, his sophistical teachings are not to be identified with the amoral, hedonistic and relativistic school of thought it is popularly recognized as. Instead, and in contrast to Socrates' warnings, the sophist is presented as a fairly competent and reasonable person, and to make things even more complicated, Socrates himself turns out to be a rather sketchy figure. In contrast to what one might expect of a dialogue designed to defend philosophy's greatest hero in the heat of combat, Socrates is not depicted as a champion of truth and clarity. Evidenced, for example, by his repeated appeal to his forgetfulness, and his many cunning attempts to influence the form of the conversation, one has only to take a brief look at the dialogue's narrative framework to see what is at stake. Since it is Socrates who relates the detailed discussion with Hippocrates and the sophists to his unnamed friend from memory, it is not only clear that he lies throughout the conversation. His manipulative strategies are also reflected by the way he constantly undermines the authority of his own words. He surrounds his defense of short questions and answers with a set of speeches much longer than Protagoras'. He exemplifies his preferred method by a long interpretative oration. And as if this was not enough, at the end, he also manages to win the intellectual competition he denies knowing how to play.

Where, in this, is the philosopher? Where are we to draw the line?

This book is an attempt to help answer these questions. As a part of the new scholarly interest in Plato's endeavor to define and defend philosophy in a complex and rich intellectual context, and by paying close attention to the dialogue's structure and composition, this book is compiled to address the question of how philosophy is dramatized and discussed in the *Protagoras*. From a variety of different perspectives, all chapters contribute to the task of understanding how Plato fought to estab-

lish and negotiate the borders of a novel intellectual discipline and the strategies that this involved.

While many of the authors in this volume argue for a sharp distinction between sophistry and philosophy, this is contested by others. Hallvard Fossheim's "The Question of Methodology in Plato's *Protagoras*" belongs to the first camp and offers a synoptic discussion of the *Protagoras* as a whole. While this dialogue has defied a cohesive reading, it is Fossheim's aim to suggest a point of view that allows us to see what may unify it. By combining a reading of two compositional levels – the structural-argumentative and the dramatic – he argues that the *Protagoras* is mainly a discussion and an illustration of method. This, he suggests, becomes clear as the dialogue lays bare a contrast between two means of soul-shaping: while Protagoras' long speeches allow a semi-digested vision to lure itself into their listeners, the transparency of Socrates' questions and answers come with a build-in-defense against such impact. While Protagoras' speeches give their listeners the enjoyable experience of having understood, although the basic components of the story have not been unwrapped, Socrates' approach ensures that thinking, or learning, is done in small, well-defined steps that allows the listener to reflect and to comprehend each inferential move. According to Fossheim, the central issue of the *Protagoras* is thus not which theory to believe, but how to reach that belief or knowledge: which method to abide by.

With a similar intension of inquiring into the general orientation of the dialogue, Knut Ågotnes' "Socrates' Sophisticated Attack on Protagoras" sets out to analyze the nature of Protagoras' teachings. This he sees as the dialogues' main theme. In contrast to what is often thought, Ågotnes argues that Socrates is here not practicing his usual method of questions and answers in order to investigate the nature of virtue, as in many other dialogues. Socrates' conversation with Protagoras is rather designed to trap the sophist into self-exposure. In order to elucidate and display the obscurity of Protagoras' teaching – which he holds to be what Socrates sets out to uncover – Ågotnes suggest a distinction between virtue and value. Through a detailed analysis of the discussions about the distinct virtues, he shows that Protagoras makes the virtues into slaves of values, such as pleasure or honor, and thus ultimately deprives them of a true moral content.

Hayden W. Ausland's "The Treatment of Virtue in Plato's *Protagoras*" deepens the discussion of the virtues and their unity by a broad analysis of the perspectives presented by the dialogues' different interlocutors. In the *Protagoras*, Ausland argues, Plato subjects virtue to examination, starting from two main questions: (1) Can virtue be taught? and (2) Is it one thing or many? One at a time, Ausland analyzes the way virtue is discussed from the distinct perspectives of the dialogue's characters. He follows these perspectives out along several philosophical-literary pathways, both ancient and modern, and shows that even if the meaning assigned to virtue in this dialogue remains elusive, it must nevertheless be more complex than what is usually allowed in modernizing philosophical interpretations of it: If virtue cannot be taught, we nevertheless find ourselves learning about it; and if it is not clearly a unity about which we read, we find ourselves prompted to look for an understanding of it that, in due course, can emerge as such.

In line with Ågotnes, Jens Kristian Larsen's "By What is the Soul Nourished? On the Art of the Physician of Souls in Plato's *Protagoras*" also analyses the difference between Socrates and Protagoras. Larsen takes his point of departure in the dialogue's beginning. Here Socrates offers a warning to the young and ambitious Hippocrates: To entrust one's soul to a sophist, he says, is dangerous, if one – like Hippocrates – does not know what is good and bad for the soul. In the light of this warning, one dramatic feature of the dialogue may seem strange: Why, if it is dangerous, does Socrates accompany Hippocrates to meet Protagoras? In order to explain this decision, Larsen argues that Socrates does two things. He demonstrate what it means to be a physician of the soul and he shows that what Hippocrates desires is not what Protagoras offers for sale. While Hippocrates hopes to become good at speaking, and thus achieve honor as a politician, the eubolia, or good council, that Protagoras claims to teach is something else. Rather than being an art of speaking, it is the ability of self-beneficial calculation. This Socrates also manages to show Hippocrates by beating the sophist in the give and take of conversation: If Hippocrates wants to become good at speaking, he should not go with Protagoras, but stay with Socrates.

In a similar vein, Vivil Valvik Haraldsen's "Is Pleasure Any Good? Weakness of Will and the Art of Measurement in Plato's *Protagoras*" aims at exposing the sophist's moral assumptions by an analysis of Socrates' proposed hedonism. Valvik Haraldsen looks for the function of his hedonistic positon in the dialogue as a whole and suggests that Socrates' argument against the weakness of will, as well as his proposal of the art of measurement as the salvation of our life, not only has the hedonistic thesis as a premise. These arguments also function as a reductio ad absurdum of the thesis itself. In this way, Valvik Haraldsen argues that Socrates' conversation with Protagoras aims at exposing the position of the sophist as both untenable and laughable: The art of measuring pleasure and pain is neither a virtue nor does it involve the knowledge needed to discover what the good is.

Cynthia Freeland's "The Science of Measuring Pleasure and Pain" expands the discussion of the art of measurement in arguing that while Socrates seems to propose such an art, it has a limited and qualified scope. In so doing, she addresses the famous argument in which Socrates denies the possibility of weakness of will (akrasia). The argument appears to presuppose hedonism, and scholars have debated whether it should be taken at face value. Socrates says that to save people from its unfortunate consequences, we need an art or a science of measurement. Freeland shows that even if the dialogue's imagery and language indicate that Socrates does propose an art that may measure or evaluate goods, including pleasures, this need not involve anything like a simplistic utilitarian hedonic calculus. The primary purpose of the science of measurement has instead a limited scope: just as we need reason to combat sensory illusions, the science of measurement can combat false appearances of pleasure. And although the *Protagoras* itself does not expand on the details of this science, Freeland suggests that they are possible to reconstruct, with the aid of related passages from the *Republic* and *Philebus*.

Further specifying how the *Protagoras* negotiates the borders and scope of philosophy, Gro Rørstadbotten's "Turning Towards Philosophy: A Reading of the

Protagoras 309a1–314e2" analyses both Socrates' and Hippocrates' turn to philosophy. In the *Protagoras*, she suggests, the readers are allowed to witness both how Socrates turns into philosophy and how Hippocrates turns towards it. Rørstadbotten's argument takes its point of departure in a detailed analyses of a set of distinct dramatic scenes: the opening meeting between Socrates and an anonymous friend; the bedroom scene, where Hippocrates, in the early morning, gets Socrates out of bed; and the courtyard scene, where Socrates awaken Hippocrates towards a recognition of his own ignorance. Not only the dramatic settings, but also the dramatic date of the dialogue is essential for Rørstadbotten's interpretation: the dialogue takes place when Socrates is 28 years old and is thus reasonably taken to be philosophy's first appearance in the distinctive form of Socratic questioning. As the *Protagoras* displays an important departure from sophistry and the teachings of Protagoras, Rørstadbotten argues that the dialogue marks a crucial moment in the development of philosophy.

With a similar ambition, Marina McCoy's "Plato's *Protagoras*, Writing, and the Comedy of Aporia" aims at showing where philosophy begins and ends. In a comparative analysis with Aristophanes' *Clouds*, McCoy shows that Plato's *Protagoras* plays off the genre of Old Comedy. In laying bare their many structural connections, she argues that Plato applies a variety of discursive strategies, commonly found in comedy, to undermine Protagoras' reputation of being wise. In this way McCoy shows how Protagoras and his sophist friends are brought down from epic heights to comic lows. But, as McCoy also points out, as Socrates joins in the sophists' conversation, he is also himself brought down. However, just as Old Comedy is both funny and serious in its treatment of urgent issues in contemporary society, the *Protagoras* is also both funny and serious in its treatment of urgent ethical and intellectual issues. It is in this light, McCoy suggests, that the dialogue's many unsolved problems must be seen. As it discusses the unity of virtue, whether virtue can be taught or not or if hedonism has something to offer, the dialogue lingers where the problems are most crucial; and by revealing the tensions and positions at stake, the need for philosophical investigation is established and brought to the surface.

In a similar vein, Vigdis Songe-Møller's "Socrates' Irony: A Voice from Nowhere?" sets out to locate the position from where philosophy speaks. By investigating the relations between the notion of voice (*phonê*), the frequent occupation with place, and the notion of *atopos* ("no place" or "strange"), she offers an elucidating topology of the dialogue and its proposed positions. Songe-Møller takes her point of departure in the first words of the dialogue: "From where, Socrates, have you just arrived?" or "From where, Socrates, are you appearing?" According to Songe-Møller these words point directly to the dialogue's leading question: From where does Socrates, the philosopher, arrive? From which perspective does he – and his dialogue partner, Protagoras – speak? According to Songe-Møller, the *Protagoras* both asks and answers these questions. In the form of an elegant portrait of how the famous sophist speaks with a foreign, or external, voice, Plato shows that he speaks from an illusionary topos. And this allows Socrates positon to stand out: Socrates does not only speak with his own authentic voice. From the perspective of one that

does not know, this is an indeterminate topos within logos, and a point of view necessary for philosophical inquiry.

Through a discussion of three short remarks on the medium of philosophy, Olof Pettersson's "Dangerous Voices: On Written and Spoken Discourse in Plato's *Protagoras*" problematizes the simple distinction between philosophical and sophistical inquiry. In line with Socrates' warning of the dangers of sophistic teaching, Pettersson argues that the three discursive forms practiced and discussed in the dialogue – long speeches, discussion of poetry and short questions and answers – all share a common problem: They sanction a commoditized use of language. And as such they are all equally dangerous for the one who seeks intellectually authenticity. In showing how also short questions and answers are liable to this critique, Pettersson does not only question the common assumption that the *Protagoras* is designed to display a functional philosophical method. He also shows how the *Protagoras* promotes independent and autonomous thinking at the expense of premediated teachings.

Kristin Sampson's "Visible and Audible Movement in the *Protagoras*" also pursues by problematizing the difference between the rhetoric of sophistry and the dialectic of philosophy. By looking at a set of different forms of transitions from the visible to the audible, Sampson asks how the dialogue's dramatic settings are meant to illustrate and problematize the conditions of dialectical inquiry. With her point of departure in a close reading of 309a–310b and 314c–318e, Sampson suggests that important clues are to be found in a shift of focus: While the dialogue begins with a focus on Socrates' physical desire for the beauty of Alcibiades, this visual desire is soon replaced by an audible: the beauty of the words of Protagoras. According to Sampson, similar transitions are traceable throughout the text, and they mark a move away from the corporeal, toward the expression of a concern for the internal and the character or the soul. By making the beauty of sophistic rhetoric and the philosophers' care for the soul parts of the same movement, Sampson both identifies whence dialectical exchange emerge and complicates any simple distinction between philosophy and sophistry.

With a related purpose, Paul Woodruff's "Why Did Protagoras Use Poetry in Education?" also problematizes the difference between Socrates and Protagoras, and suggests that their affinities are greater than often assumed. Woodruff begins in the lengthy discussion on Simonides' poem. Here, important likenesses and differences between the philosopher and the sophist are on display. While Socrates, by parodying what he takes to be Protagoras' method, shows the absurdity of trying to find out what a dead poet intended by his ambiguous, and even contradictory, lines, Protagoras criticizes Simonides with the aim of straightening out what the poet says and to end up with a true expression of the poet's intention. According to Woodruff there is however also a profound affinity between the two: Even if Protagoras examines texts by dead poets and Socrates examines beliefs of those alive, they both agree that speakers have the power to improve their beliefs by seeing and fixing tensions among them. "If I am right", Woodruff concludes, "Protagoras is the grandfather of what Plato has given us as Socratic questioning, the *elenchus*".

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The Question of Methodology in Plato's *Protagoras*

Hallvard Fossheim

The *Protagoras*, one of Plato's most entertaining and beloved works, is also among his most perplexing. Along with one or two other Platonic dialogues, the *Protagoras* has defied a unified reading—a reading that makes sense of the dialogue's various parts as belonging to one whole. It is my aim with this article to suggest a new reading that allows us to see the unifying theme of the *Protagoras*. In doing this, I will identify a crucial asset of philosophical methodology when this is contrasted with what Plato seems to have taken to be among its main competitors, the persuasive speech-making of the sophists.

Two Methodologies and One Challenge

The first generation of sophists, among whom Protagoras was the most important individual practitioner, had as a main asset in their arsenal the production of the monologue or speech, designed to inform and persuade listeners to believe and feel what the speaker thinks they should believe and feel. Plato developed, practiced, and in his dialogues dramatized *dialectic* as an alternative methodology for making participants relate to truth and do so in the desired way.[1] It seems to me that there

An earlier and much shorter draft of some of the ideas presented here was published in Fossheim (2014a). I am grateful to the audiences at the *Poetry & Philosophy* conference at the University of Bergen and at the *Thinking Through The Ages* conference at the University of Tromsø for their responses, and to Anna Schriefl for her written set of constructive comments.

[1] This is of course not to say that Plato did not also utilize speech-like formats or that the sophists—including Protagoras himself—did not also know how to construct brief arguments and counter-arguments.

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are two main sub-varieties of dialectic exemplified in the *Protagoras*, and one general sort of speechmaking.[2] Right after the framing dialogue, we follow an interaction between Socrates and young Hippocrates. The questioning that Socrates performs there may be said to have a protreptic function and framework. The dialectical format none the less seems to be elenctic: Hippocrates is forced to question his own assumptions about what is the right thing to do. The same or a very similar style of questioning is later carried out by Socrates vis-à-vis Protagoras. Finally, in the baffling late part where Socrates drags the others along on the road to hedonism, the questions are leading and biased towards positive replies in the manner of what we might call positive dialectic. In both variants, the questioner – Socrates – does most of the talking, and makes the choices of direction. The difference between the two seems to be mainly that in the first instance, Socrates starts from assertions uttered by the interlocutor, or claims directly implied by his actions and desires, and the process takes the form of undermining the interlocutor's confidence in those assertions, whereas in the second instance, Socrates' effort takes the form of leading the interlocutors towards a thesis that is framed by Socrates himself.

Old school sophistic, on the other hand, is exemplified not least in Protagoras' so-called Great Speech, and also in Socrates' follow-up monologue. This format is characterized by at least the following four features: (1) a rather long presentation, (2) narratives, (3) evocations of accepted authorities, and (4) flattering the audience; the activity is carried out in order to explain something to them or to make them see a more or less general point the way the speaker wants them to see it.

What I will suggest, is that the *Protagoras* is mainly about the strengths and weaknesses of these two main formats for soul-shaping: the dialogue is a discussion and illustration of method. And there is one feature or asset of the philosophical methodology or "tool" that is brought to the centre of attention in that dialogue.

Seeing the dialogue in this way, can at the same time help us see unity in what can otherwise easily appear as a rather messy plurality of topics. And I take this to be an indication that the interpretation has something going for it. For the *Protagoras* is a baffling dialogue. It's a text that is entertaining. Parts of it are perhaps the closest Plato ever came to light-hearted comedy. At the same time, it offers several highly convoluted arguments. And most strikingly, some of the things that are said in it, not least by Socrates, are difficult to square with the picture of agency and reason we get in other dialogues. This fact comes on top of the more general fact that it is very difficult to see what constitutes the whole of the dialogue. The various passages and topics seem to intrude on each other rather than lead to or build on each other. Most texts by Plato are not like that, so we are not necessarily being anachronistic in wanting to find something like a key to the dialogue as a whole. Some other works by Plato, offer similar challenges, and then this is something that should be, and generally is, acknowledged as a challenge.

I think the following would be a not unreasonable carving of the dialogue at its joints. (In this context, I'll ignore the framing dialogue, 309a–310a.)

[2] For detailed analysis of the kinds of dialectic and of how they relate to activities in the Academy, cf., respectively, Frede (1992) and Ryle (1965).

- *The risk in soul-shaping*. The bulk of the dialogue opens with an exchange between Socrates and young Hippocrates, who has just heard that Protagoras is in town. Hippocrates is in a hurry to get over to Callias' house, where Protagoras holds court. Socrates questions Hippocrates about what he expects to learn from Protagoras (310a–314c).
- *Protagoras' Great Speech and the teachability of virtue*. Once at Callias' house, Socrates asks Protagoras one of the questions he had asked Hippocrates earlier: What does Protagoras teach? Among the answers is 'virtue'. Socrates argues that virtue cannot be taught. Protagoras gives his Great Speech explaining how everyone teaches the various virtues to everyone in a community (314c–328d).
- *The unity of virtue*. Socrates fastens on Protagoras' use of the plural—'virtues'—and asks him whether they are several, like the parts of a face, or one, like gold.[3] Protagoras opts for the first possibility, and Socrates argues that the diverse virtues mentioned by Protagoras are really one: temperance, courage, piety, justice, and wisdom (328d–334c).
- *A methodological quandary*. At this point follows a heated debate about how they should proceed, where several characters participate (334c–338e).
- *Simonides' poem*. Protagoras changes gear to interpretation of a poem. Socrates offers an alternative reading of the same poem (339a–347b).
- *Hedonism*. Socrates returns to the issue of the relations between the virtues, and leads Protagoras and the others to agree to a kind of hedonist calculus: virtue is reason that is able to avoid miscalculations with a view to pleasure (347b–360e).
- *The teachability of virtue redux*. Socrates now says that virtue can be taught, while Protagoras seems at a loss concerning how it is taught. Socrates is ready to continue the search for the nature of virtue. But Protagoras has had enough, and so Socrates is off (360e–362a).

The following seem to be the five major elements that together defy a unified reading.

1. The nature and acquisition of virtue
2. Protagoras' Great Speech
3. Methodological issues
4. Simonides' poem
5. Forced hedonism

On the face of it, these are quite disparate topics. By focusing on the exemplifications and discussions of methodology, I wish to suggest a reading of the dialogue which might serve to tie these different and disparate parts together, Not least, I hope it can make some kind of sense of why Plato lets Socrates present—and force those present to agree to—the baffling and out-of-character hedonist theory.[4] My

[3] For a thorough analysis isolating this part of the dialogue, cf. Price (2011, 85–94).

[4] It is true that, since Grote, the odd reader has thought it a viable reading that Socrates is to be taken as a hedonist; however, as this would jar both with what Socrates appears to represent in every other dialogue and with what seem to be the philosophical perspectives taken seriously in them, I will not defend in this article the separate claim that Socrates is not meant to be portrayed

suggestion is that the *Protagoras*, by means of a combined effort on an argumentative-structural level and on a dramatic level, lets us see and experience central facets of the two methodologies defended by, respectively, Protagoras and Socrates: while Protagoras' sort of speechmaking allows a loose and semi-digested vision to lure itself into the listener, Socrates' favored form of question-and-answer activity comes with a built-in defense against such psychological shaping, making it in this respect a safer way of submitting to the effects of educational interaction. This difference between the two approaches has to do both with the format itself and with the sort of mode in which it sets those who are exposed to it.

The Question of Method

The bulk of the *Protagoras* constitutes a battle of wits between Socrates and Protagoras. Crucially, the open disagreements concern both theses or theories and methodology. Most recent interpreters have focused on the level of theory in their efforts to make sense of the text.[5] But it is on the methodological level that the disagreement creates the most drama in the dialogue. At the point where this disagreement surfaces most forcefully, we have already had a taste of Protagoras' penchant for longish monologues and Socrates' desire to carry out his investigation by means of short questions and answers. And Socrates goes as far as to threaten to leave the company altogether if he does not get his way.

> As you can argue in both styles, you should have made me some concession, so that we could have had a conversation. But now, since you are not willing to do so, and I have an

as a serious hedonist, but take that as a given for the purposes of this article. For an argument that the hedonist theory presented by Socrates is a natural consequence of Protagorean relativism and constructivism, cf. Rowett (2013).

[5] Often taking their cue from Gregory Vlastos' approach; cf., e.g., his 1956. The question of the unity of the virtues is by Vlastos spelled out in terms of mutual implications (the presence of each virtue implies the presence of each of the others). In a central later contribution on this specific issue, Terry Penner argues that the relation is one of identity (Penner 1973). Other contributions in this more limited area of research include Weiss (1985), Wakefield (1987), Devereux (1992), Woolf (2002). One of the most important contributions to our understandings in recent years is Politis (2012). Politis, by taking seriously Socrates' assertion that the main question in the Protagoras is about whether virtue can be taught, while the *ti esti*-question "What is virtue?" is a means to reaching a verdict on it, manages to show connections between arguments in different parts of the dialogue. However, although Politis claims that his chosen angle "holds out the promise of providing a unified and holistic reading of this great dialogue" (213; cf. 237), this is true only of the arguments pertaining to virtue and not the dialogue as such: Vasilis has little to say about how to understand, e.g., the methodological section, the use of Simonides, or the forced adherence to the hedonist position, and so does not provide a unified and holistic reading of the *Protagoras*. Politis thus provides a more exact report on the limitations of his reading in saying merely that "Socrates' concern in the coda is with the dialogue's *arguments* in their totality" (215, my emphasis). Apart from this discrepancy, it seems to me that Politis' and my reading are complementary rather than in competition.

> engagement, and couldn't wait for you to spin out these long speeches—I have to go somewhere—I shall go. (335C; all translations from the *Protagoras* by C.C.W. Taylor)

Socrates adds emphasis to his threat by actually getting up as if to leave (335d). His ultimatum provokes a series of methodological comments and suggestions from several of those who are present.[6] The comments also have the function of making obvious what has already been indicated by Socrates' words at this point, namely, that the two methodologies are well known to those present as alternative ways of communicating.

So what are the differences between the two interlocutors' preferred methodologies, which we might denote *brachulogia* ("shortspeaking") and *makrologia* ("longspeaking")?[7] The method of instruction favoured in this case by Protagoras is exemplified in his Great Speech. He presents what is supposed to constitute an explanation by combining mythological story-telling with elucidations or arguments pertaining to certain of its parts, and not least, he does so without interruptions in the course of the presentation. The result is a rather grand vision, fleshed out in very broad outlines with little detail. In addition, the replies are presented mainly in a mythical format that hides which mechanisms or causal relations are really in play. (Provided, of course, that the individualized figures of Epimetheus, Prometheus, and Zeus are not to be taken literally as the ultimate explanations offered.)

The grand vision is told in the form of a story, which is one of two modes of presentation suggested by Protagoras himself, the other being a more systematic—but certainly equally monologish—exposition. His criterion for opting for the story version is that this is the "more enjoyable" mode (320a). And the story *is* highly enjoyable. It is partly the use of broad strokes without interruption that makes us feel we are being exposed to something akin to wisdom. The equally broad use of a mythical format also contributes to a sense of significance, a sense that is at no point undermined by self-criticism, doubt, or the risks of concretization. To illustrate the

[6] Alcibiades, 336b–d; Critias, 336d–e; Prodicus, 337a–c; Hippias, 337c–338b.

[7] The terms are used by Socrates in a parallel discussion in the *Gorgias* (449c); as Adam and Adam indicate in their comments (151; cf. 104, 142), while the wording is not exactly the same in the *Protagoras*, the main focus remains on the length of a speaker's contribution and its effect on the interaction between the participants. After Socrates has presented what might be a bluff in his own case—that he forgets what was said if the speaker goes on for too long (334c-d) – he thus flatters Protagoras with the following remark, meant to persuade him to allow for rapid exchange of questions and answers rather than long monologues: Socrates says he has heard that "you [Protagoras] can speak at such length, when you choose to, that your speech never comes to an end, and then again you can be so brief on the same topic that no one could be briefer, and as well as doing it yourself you can teach someone else how to do it. So if you are going to have a discussion with me, use the latter method, that of brevity" (334E–335A). The difference in methodology is also related to differences in character that are not altogether accidental. This point is emphasized by Plato through his letting Prodicus and Hippias dramatize themselves in the course of the methodological discussion, thus reminding us that method is intimately linked to character. But that link is the most emphatic in the contrast between Protagoras and Socrates—the one jovial and friendly, but easily distressed by attempts to undermine his authority, the other sharp and shifty, but always willing to go through an extra round of testing in order to shed mistakes and get closer to the truth.

level at which Protagoras operates here, he has Zeus say the following (322d). Justice and conscience are to be distributed

> To all […], and let all share in them; for cities could not come into being, if only a few shared in them as in the other arts. And lay down on my authority a law that he who cannot share in conscience and justice is to be killed as a plague on the city.

The passage, or indeed the speech as a whole, does not offer any explanation of the nature of virtue's teachability. It simply seems to make sense to us that, if we did not possess a widely shared sense of justice, we just would not be able to survive, much less to thrive in complex social structures like cities (322b–323a). And so we feel that we grasp something significant. But we do so without finding out much about what justice is, or where it actually comes from, or how it more concretely relates to other human capabilities and virtues.

The method of instruction favoured by Socrates is exemplified not least in the long section (from 351b on) where he drags the others along the path towards hedonism. By contrast to the Protagorean approach to imparting putative knowledge, Socrates' method requires dividing the package to be delivered into small fragments, and forcing the interlocutor to consider and agree to them one by one before proceeding to the next one. Formally, this process takes place by Socrates posing leading or hypothetical questions, interspersed with explanatory notes, and the interlocutor indicating that he agrees to the step being taken for each move.[8]

To exemplify, Socrates tries to force his interlocutor over to his own mode of communication the moment Protagoras has finished presenting his grand myth: "Now, Protagoras, I've very nearly got the whole thing, if you would just answer me this." (329b) Characteristically, Socrates pounces at a part of the whole that has been laid down. And it seems quite clear that he would have liked to do so by interrupting Protagoras earlier, that is, by denying Protagoras and the interlocutors the uncritical pleasure of Protagoras' grand narrative. For that pleasure has given everyone the notion that they understand something, although the basic components of the story—such as the nature of justice or its teachability—have not been unwrapped in the least. Socratic unwrapping, which more often than not proves to be at the same time an undoing of the examined assertions, takes place through systematic questioning. The questioner goes through an issue by considering the picture's details. And the respondent is normally not allowed to move beyond a series of "Yes" and "No". Such an approach can certainly be entertaining to follow. But it does not provide participants or audience with the pleasures of partaking in and being reminded of the wisdom of tradition and their own good sense. Socrates' more jarring and potentially uncomfortable approach we see exemplified in his immediate questioning of Protagoras (329b–334b),[9] at which Protagoras attempts to

[8] Presumably, as long as the interlocutor follows the exposition and does not arrive at a point where he is clear that he is no longer willing to accept the consequences of what has gone before, the instruction's success does not depend entirely on that mouthing. But as the audience for most people, including Protagoras, provides extra motivation to be careful about what one agrees to, the inclusion of some public affirmation will have a sharpening effect on the respondent.

[9] From 329b and on to 334b.

escape into a longer and rhetorically more developed sort of reply. This, of course, is where the methodological dispute commences.

The Danger in Soul Shaping

The ridiculousness of the setting where all the sophists are introduced (from 314e) constitutes a striking contrast to the opening of the *Protagoras*.[10] For the main dialogue's opening possesses an unambiguous, down-to-earth earnestness which we find only rarely in Plato. Says Socrates to his eager young companion,

> Don't take chances in a matter of such importance. For you know, there's much more risk in buying learning than in buying food. If you buy food or drink from a pedlar or a merchant you can carry it away in another container, and before you actually eat or drink it you can set it down at home and call in an expert and take his advice on what you ought to eat or drink and what you ought not, and how much, and when you ought to take it. So there is no risk in buying. But you can't carry learning away in a jar; you have to put down the price and take the learning into your soul right away. By the time you go away you have already assimilated it, and got the harm or the benefit. (314a–b)

At the point when Socrates says these words to Hippocrates, the young man has tried to pull Socrates along to meet Protagoras, so eager for the meeting that he has arrived at Socrates' place while it is still too dark to see.[11]

What is conveyed by Socrates in the opening sequence is that, through our being educated, we are – partially through our own agency or engagement – affected by the educator in such a way that we become something we were not, without knowing on beforehand what it is we become or whether that development is for the better or for the worse. For the sophistic forms of soul-shaping, the normal state of affairs is one where the person does not know what the education does to him before it has already entered and become an integral part of him (if even then). In other words, the issue setting the drama of the *Protagoras* is that of being altered by someone in ways crucial to one's goodness and well-being. Such alteration is something that Socrates clearly believes to be possible – in fact, that possibility is the source of his worries.[12]

The stage where Hippocrates and Socrates try to enter Callias' house amounts to a humorous reminder of the difficulty in identifying types of educators. The eunuch opening the door mistakes them for sophists, a fact which immediately shifts the mood from the seriousness of the preceding scene into something almost farcical as

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[10] I.e., following the framing sequence.

[11] This is what makes it possible for Socrates to have a proper *tête-à-tête* in order to warn Hippocrates before confronting the great sophist (311a): Socrates gives the dark as a reason for them to wait for the daylight before setting off.

[12] The qualities are described and named in different ways in the *Protagoras*, but at least from 320a on, "virtue" (*aretê*) figures prominently. When he at 319a–320c says he does not believe that virtue can be taught, he thinks of teaching in a narrow sense as systematic instruction, in contradistinction to Protagoras' much wider understanding of teaching as socialization.

he slams the door in their faces (314c–e). While this episode helps set the mood for the scene confronting Socrates and Hippocrates inside, it also illustrates how it is not obvious who is who in matters of education. This amusing little episode could thus be said to constitute a minimal reminder of a problem we know is taken seriously in other works of Plato, like the hunt for the sophist in the dialogue of that name: the challenge of identifying and classifying different putative educators and their impact on the souls of others.

Protagoras shares Socrates' understanding of what is at stake, in the sense that Protagoras in his public self-presentation places himself in the company of all sorts of educators up to his own time.

> I maintain that the craft of the sophist is an ancient one, but that its practitioners in ancient times, for fear of giving offence, adopted the subterfuge of disguising it as some other craft, as Homer and Hesiod and Simonides did with poetry, and Orpheus and Musaeus and their followers with religious rites and prophesies. Some, I have heard, went in for physical training, like Iccus of Taras and, in our own day, Herodicus of Selymbria (originally of Megara), as good a sophist as any. Your fellow citizen Agathocles, a great sophist, used music and literature as cover, and so did Pythocleides of Ceos and many others. (316d–e)

Protagoras refers to all educators as sophists—a classification which provides him with the legitimacy and authority of tradition and acknowledged expertise—and thus to himself as an educator. So he too reminds us that soul-changing is indeed the name of the game, while at the same time illustrating how difficult it can be to properly separate the different kinds of would-be educators.

With this in mind, it is easy to appreciate the intimate relation between the opening and the main part of the dialogue. The plethora of figures Protagoras presents as his predecessors in the sophistic profession makes vivid that we would be hard pressed to define what, more concretely, unites them all, and what sets them apart from each other. For clearly, these figures have functioned in partly different ways and towards partly different aims. Uncritically seeing them as all working on the same team covers up the crucial question with which Socrates confronted Hippocrates at the beginning of the day.

> I mean that you are going to entrust your soul to the care of a man who is, as you agree, a sophist. But I should be surprised if you even know what a sophist is. And yet if you don't know that, you don't even know what it is that you're handing your soul over to, nor even whether it's something good or something bad. (312b–c)

What is a given educator offering, and how will submitting to him affect your soul? After a fashion, the good-natured, humorous, and synoptic way in which Protagoras presents them all as playing for the same team only exacerbates the issue.[13]

[13] Heda Segvic's observation that Socrates' opening Homer citation (309b) constitutes an invocation of "gods that bewitch and harm (Circe), and gods that protect (Hermes)" (250) is entirely in line with this interpretation: cf. Segvic (2006).

Method and Substance

So why the hedonist section? The presentation of this theory does not forcefully dramatize that people are changed by instruction, because in the end no one seems to comfortably believe in that theory. I submit that the function of that presentation may be the very opposite of persuading anyone of its truth, namely, that of illustrating for us that there is a safety valve in Socrates' manner of teaching: this methodology forces the pupil, interlocutor, or reader to face, *rationally and piecemeal*, whatever is introduced, before making it part of her soul.

This suggestion has the merit of fitting perfectly with the opening's description of how most soul shaping is dangerous precisely because the elements are assimilated into one's soul before one can examine them. This was, as we remember, Socrates' greatest worry. And the dialogue dramatizes, through both the interlocutors' reactions and the reader's own hesitant reactions, that the worry is nowhere near as acute if we apply the Socratic manner of soul-shaping.

Two features in particular stand out when this brand of *brachulogia* and Protagorean *makrologia* are contrasted. First, there is the analysis of the content into minimal packages, which can then be considered in isolation. To take an example from Socrates' setting up of the hedonist trap, he asks Protagoras the following. "And are these things good for any other reason than that they result in pleasures and the relief from and avoidance of pain?" (354c).

The question invites an assertion. But it does so in a way which makes clear that this assertion builds on, but does not follow from, the *previous* conclusion: that when we call painful things good, this is because they produce good things later on (354b). Similarly, it is followed by, but does not entail, the more sweeping assertion that "it's pain which you regard as evil, and pleasure as good" (354d). What we might term Socrates' "minimal work package" approach ensures that thinking, or learning, or the undoing of putative insight, is done in small, orderly steps.

Second, there is the demand that the interlocutor take an active stance towards each step, deciding then and there whether she is for now willing to accept each proposition.[14] This is generally the most uncomfortable side of Socrates' approach. Even when the text reports only their replies, and not their appearance, we can feel his interlocutors cringing. Not only are they singled out and forced to take responsibility for a series of statements while feeling ever less confident in them. In the *Protagoras*, as in many other dialogues, they are forced to do so in front of an attentive and often agonistic audience. This means not only that the interlocutor is held to his word almost as to a vow or an oath, in a more binding fashion than would perhaps have been the case in a more intimate encounter. It also means that the story of what was said will be spread to anyone who is willing to listen, in a way that contributes to defining the person in question, more or less entirely beyond his own

[14] This also suggests another aspect of such critical, leading questioning: it is a method of inquiry whereby the participant and audience do not only learn during the interaction, but where important parts of the learning process normally take place after the actual interaction is over.

control. These aspects of the dialogue dramatize how serious a business it can be to *mean* something.

These two features of Socrates' approach—moving in small, well-defined steps and taking a reflective stance on each issue along the way—together make it more likely that one is on the lookout for weaknesses in what is set up for agreement, and is able to identify exactly what is wrong in such cases—if not then and there, then perhaps after having chewed on the discomfort for a while.

By contrast, Protagorean *makrologia* gives one a feeling that one is in the presence of a grander vision of something, with few details even visible. And instead of critically examining that vision, one accepts it—if it is accepted—on a combination of trust in the speaker's insight and some kind of admiration for his ability to conjure up the apparently seamless image in the first place. With a liberal use of metaphors added, it becomes difficult to know exactly what one has learnt and perhaps silently accepted. For instance, what exactly does it mean that Zeus had justice distributed to all? (322d). If you think you agree to this, what exactly is it that you think you know?

The dialogue indicates, then, that one form of education is safer than the alternative with which it is contrasted, while at the same time reminding us that we are a kind of being which is susceptible to different kinds of education. The final hedonistic *tour de force* lets us experience this difference first-hand. Socrates' approach, even when it is used to force us to agree to things we sense must be wrong, can also help us identify the wrongness. To use Socrates' own metaphor, his approach can make it possible, at least to some extent, to "take the learning away in a jar" (314b, quoted above).

Simonides' Poem

Two of the dialogue's main parts—the nature of virtue and the question of hedonism—can be seen to contribute to the same issue once we take seriously the opening's intense questioning about the perils of soul-shaping. But there is still one significant part of the dialogue that has not been discussed in this context: What about the section of the text (338e–347a) dealing with Simonides' poem? Most readers of the *Protagoras* have tried to find truths or mistakes in Socrates' avowedly original take on the poem, explaining why his interpretation is a good one or a bad one. Again, I suspect that the most important function of this part of the text is to remind us of the scope of social practices that fall short of the methodological standards Socrates defends in the *Protagoras*, the transmission of the authority of poets being a central instance of such practices. Of course, this part too ostensively is about questions of moral psychology. But if we take the crucial discussion in the *Protagoras* to be about methodology rather than about theses of moral psychology, this part too falls into place in a more satisfactory manner.

Great poets were considered sources of wisdom. Quoting and expounding on a known poem would have been a typical way in which to approach important

questions in life, about what an individual, a smaller community, or a city-state should do in a given situation. But this use of the poets is nothing other than the *makrologia* to which Socrates is so averse: the putative authority is allowed to go on speaking, without being questioned directly. Thus Socrates claims that their gathering has "no need of anyone else to take part and in particular no need of poets; you can't question them about what they say, but in most cases when people quote them, one says the poet means one thing and one another, and they argue over points which can't be established with any certainty" (347e).[15] Even Protagoras' own peculiar manner of utilizing poetry as part of his educational programme – having students not simply repeating but also criticizing the poems – remains in the form of *makrologia*, because there is no direct way in which the original speaker (the poet) can be addressed and forced to go beyond what he has already said in order to explain his original words.

Socrates points out these limitations of the social practice of expounding poetry as part of his advocacy of returning to the *brachulogia* of his own question-and-answer format. He does so in a way designed to sway even those who would like to stick with the poetry, by likening it to inviting flute-girls at a drinking-party rather than being able to entertain oneself with conversation (347b–348a). "But in a party of well-bred, educated people, you never see flute-girls or dancers or harp-girls, but they can entertain one another with their own conversation without any such childish trifles, speaking and listening in turn in a dignified fashion, even if they drink a great deal" (347d). In one rather elegant phrase, Socrates thus makes prostitutes of the poets and low-life of their interpreters while holding up his own favoured type of critical exchange as an ideal.

An additional bonus of the illustration of commenting on poetry, as this is offered in the *Protagoras*, may be that we witness Socrates becoming as problematic as any other character. This places in relief that Socrates is not per se a magical guarantee for the soundness of the investigation: not the person but the approach is what counts the most. That warning is appropriately placed directly before Socrates proceeds to drag his unwilling interlocutors to an articulation of a hedonist position.

The major lesson to take home would seem to be that whether the speaker is living or dead, present or absent, the basic issue is whether or not the format for possible learning or soul-shaping allows for direct and critical questioning of the speaker of the words as part of that speaking. If this is taken to be the main significance of the passage, the present reading allows the Simonides section to form part of a unified text.

[15] Incidentally, this means that there is only a partial overlap between the criticism in the *Protagoras* and the criticism voiced against (certain sorts of) writing in the *Phaedrus*: in the *Protagoras*, while the main point concerns (1) the speaker's absence making it impossible to question him, Socrates' wording also makes it central that (2) this format twists the topic of conversation from what is true to what a certain person meant about it, and (3) that person represents a specific group: the poets.

Form and Content

The Great Speech helps us move our attention from mere theses to the issue of how those theses are reached or tested. Protagoras is made to present a view of education, and of human beings, as not purely rational but many-faceted. One thing which might strike the reader of the dialogue is the extent to which this vision resembles the complex view of humanity and of moral psychology Socrates details in certain other dialogues. Protagoras holds that our qualities are more like the parts of a face than they are like pieces of gold (329d–e). A version of this view is what we find in, e.g., the *Republic*, which operates with three soul parts, each with its distinctive function and dynamics, analogously to the relation between, say, eyes and mouth.[16] Similarly, Protagoras is made to conjure up a vision of education as socialization, that is, as something which is the prerogative of the city as a whole and which takes place through a thousand nudges from a thousand directions, and not only from a specific kind of rational interaction with a teacher.[17] Again, this is pretty much the gist of the *Republic*'s version of how to produce a decent human being.[18]

I take it that this otherwise baffling and confusing feature of the *Protagoras* makes sense if what that dialogue is out to do, is not primarily to present a given content ("Here's the truth about…") but a certain form ("This is how you investigate…"). Precisely by letting Protagoras wander close to a Platonically believable theory about moral psychology and education, while Socrates is made to present a theory that is over-simplistic and alien to most of what the author gives attention to in his other works, Plato manages to bring out the difference between assertion and method. It is thus no accident that the most dramatic part of the dialogue is when the interlocutors are arguing about how to proceed—in a word, about method. For this is the main topic throughout the dialogue. The *Protagoras* forcefully demonstrates how Plato transmits methodological insight not only when he lets his characters stop in their tracks and discuss it explicitly (as they sometimes do), but also when the reader might easily be lulled into thinking that the theses and arguments under consideration define what is going on in the text.

In the *Protagoras*, the central issue is not which theory to believe, but how to reach and hold that belief or knowledge: which methodology to abide by.

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[16] For studies of other specific ways in which the Protagoras figure in this dialogue overlaps with views one might take to be Plato's own, cf., e.g., Stalley (1995) and Kastely (1996).

[17] Although that activity is what can bring someone to the final, higher realizations of reason. For a synoptic view of the thousand nudges provided by what he calls "material culture" in the Republic, cf. Burnyeat (1999).

[18] Similarly, the *Republic*'s Socrates takes it as a given that some measure of justice and moderation must be distributed among all citizens. I argue that a correspondingly complex moral psychology is in play in the *Laws* as well in Fossheim (2014b).

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Socrates' Sophisticated Attack on Protagoras

Knut Ågotnes

This paper is written on the supposition that the main theme in the *Protagoras* is the nature of Protagoras' teaching. This teaching, as it must have been displayed in his lessons, is, however, neither accounted for nor discussed directly in the dialogue. Instead of asking Protagoras for a trial lecture,[1] Socrates from the start is set to challenge the underlying assumptions of his teaching; especially the structure of its moral underpinnings. This structure, I assume, is less formed by theoretical thinking on Protagoras' part than by social and institutional factors, factors that to a large extent determine the professional role of Protagoras as a teacher. I will discuss this structure under four headings: (1) The expectations of a potential student. (2) The ambiguities of Protagoras' position as a teacher. (3) Protagoras' attitude to the virtues. (4) What is it to live well?

The Expectations of a Potential Student

Socrates does not like Hippocrates' eagerness to take lessons from Protagoras. He tries to warn him and paints a negative picture of the teaching he can expect. Socrates grounds this assessment not only on his knowledge of Protagoras as a person, but also on his opinion of the sophists in general.[2] We may then assume that it is not only Protagoras that is going to be tested in this dialogue, but – through their leading

[1] Which Protagoras is ready to deliver with great pleasure (217c).

[2] Yet Socrates seems to know quite a bit about Protagoras; he knows and finds reason to mention that he spends most of his time indoors (311a), that he is the first to teach for a fee (349a), and that he is renowned for his wisdom, something he refers to with several ironical remarks, for instance at 318b, 338c and 348e.

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figure – the sophists generally. We recognize his description of them from other dialogues, they take money for their lectures, and compared with the assumed science-based arts (*technai*) their expertise is dubious. Hippocrates thinks he knows that they teach how to become clever speakers (312d), and Socrates does not contest that.

Honour matters to Hippocrates. He blushes when Socrates asks if he wants to learn how to become a sophist. To *be* a sophist is not quite honourable among the elite that Hippocrates belongs to.[3] He is, however, not ashamed of learning Protagoras' métier. Thus he does not think that an attachment to Protagoras as a student is dishonourable.

Socrates' account of the teaching of the sophists is, however, interspersed with exaggerated warnings about the danger to the soul of the students. "You cannot carry away teachings in a separate vessel: you are compelled, when you have handed over the price, to take the teaching in your very soul by learning it, and so depart either an injured man or a benefited man" (314b).[4] This is not only overblown, but simply untrue as a general statement. It shows how seriously Socrates views the situation, he obviously thinks that Hippocrates could easily fall a victim to Protagoras' influence.

Nothing, however, can hold Hippocrates back. He is filled with desire, as Socrates tells Protagoras later: "He desires (*epithumia*) to become your pupil, and he would be glad to know what benefit he will derive from associating with you," Socrates says to Protagoras (318a). Socrates had already at 311d mentioned Hippocrates' extreme earnestness. He had come to him in the morning "…in the settled conviction that at all costs [he] must converse with Protagoras" (313b). What is it that he is so desperate to gain? "He is desirous (*epithumein*) to gain consideration (*ellogimos*)[5] in the polis, and he believes he can best gain it by consorting with you," Socrates tells Protagoras when they meet (316 c). Socrates knew Hippocrates before, and their early morning conversation has probably made him quite sure that this way of presenting his desire is correct. In Socrates' opinion there is obviously little of philosophical interest involved in Hippocrates' desire for Protagoras' teaching.

Protagoras is happy with what he hears about Hippocrates' wishes: "… if he applies to me, he will learn precisely and solely that for which he has come" (318e). And that is: "good judgment (*eubolia*) in his own affairs, showing how best to order

[3] Hippocrates belongs to "a great and prosperous family" (316b).

[4] The translation used is, with some abridgements, W.R.M. Lamb's in the Loeb Classical Library (Plato 1999).

[5] Liddell and Scott translates *ellogimos* as "held in account, notable, famous", in translations of the *Protagoras* rendered as "getting a reputation", "become eminent", "make a name for himself", "to be a man of respect in the city", "held in high regard", "how to be most effective". "Consideration" is Lamb's translation. None of these versions points to any desire for wisdom or knowledge for its own sake.

his own home; and in the affairs of his city, how he must have most influence (*dunatotatos*) on public affairs both in speech and in action".[6]

The Ambiguities of Protagoras' Position as a Teacher

Neither we nor Hippocrates get to know exactly how Protagoras lectured. For Socrates immediately puts his finger on two salient points in Protagoras' position, that, I contend, open up the main problematic of the *Protagoras*.

The first point is *technê*. Protagoras had already presented himself as a successor of the ancient craft of the sophists (*sophistikên technên …palaian*), and he had merged sophistry, poetry, other fine arts and handicrafts under the appellation *technê* (316d). This indicates that he takes good judgment (*eubolia*) to be a *technê*. He admits this when he agrees to Socrates' reformulation of his statement on what his teaching consists in. Socrates says "…you appear to be speaking of the political science (*politikên technên*) and undertaking to make men good citizens (*agatous politas*)" (319a).[7] "This is exactly the profession I proclaim (*epaggelma o epagellomai*)", Protagoras affirms. However, he weakens the import of the word *exactly* by his use of the word *epaggelma* instead of *technê*. We may find the reason for that half a page before, at 318d, when he distances himself from the other sophists. He says here that he is *not* doing the same as they. *They* maltreat the young by forcing them into arts (*technai*). This unexpected negative attitude to the *technai* may have been uttered with his prospective students, including the present Hippocrates, in mind. To learn a *technê* was hard work, which took a long time, as all architects, mathematicians, and doctors could confirm. This had little appeal to most young men of means and leisure. The *technikoi* were also generally held in low regard.

Technê had, however, one very valuable and widely recognized asset that few, if any "nontechnical" métier or profession could claim: it was thought to be based on a fair amount of *epistêmê*, a true and non-*doxic* set of principles and mechanisms that governed operations in the field in question. A *technê* had a delimited area, and its tenets could not be expected to pertain to other disciplines. Within its proper

[6] Liddell and Scott: "*dunatos* strong, mighty, able, powerful… *oi dunatoi*" the chief men of rank and influence". McCoy (2008, 64) translates *dunatotatos* "most capable or powerful". The ordering of one's own household is not mentioned again. That it is mentioned at all together with political competence, however, indicates the level of expertise we should look for in the political teaching of Protagoras. It was generally assumed that these two kinds of "good judgment" had a common base (Xenophon 2002. *Oeconomicus*: 521, XXI. 2.). This adds weight to the assumption that Protagoras' political teaching had a practical focus and that it consisted of advice on how to excel in speaking and acting. It would probably have included rhetoric, political strategy and tactics and all sorts of things pertaining to the workings of the polis.

[7] "No one now thinks of grudging or reserving his skill in what is just and lawful as he does in other expert knowledge (*technêmaton*); for our neighbours' justice and knowledge, I take it, is to our advantage, and consequently we all tell and teach one another what is just and lawful" (327b). Here, in the great speech, where his own teaching is not directly in question, it is implied that moral and political skill is a *technê*. Note also that people teach it with an instrumental purpose in mind.

boundaries these tenets were supposed not only to yield sure results, if applied correctly. They could also be taught, since the master was supposed to be able to think through the fundamental principles and mechanisms and express their nature and inner connections in words.

Socrates has managed to manoeuvre Protagoras into a difficult position. Protagoras would obviously like to borrow *technê*'s most useful qualities. Its *epistêmê* would give his métier a solid epistemological basis, and its purported ability to produce successful results would be a very useful quality to transfer to political activity. That it can be taught, is of course a crucial concern for Protagoras, the teacher.

There is however, another reason for Protagoras' lack of clarity on this point, which is intrinsic to his profession as such. Even if he had tried to circumscribe his field and set it apart from other disciplines, it is difficult to see how it could contain an integrated theoretical base. Such an attempt goes against the general understanding of *eubolia*, which was supposed to be good judgment or good advice, even about how to run a household, without a clearly delimited field of application. Nonetheless, Protagoras could have tried to carve out a special form of good judgment, with specific basic tenets. A possible foundation for such an attempt could have been general moral theory. He could also have tried to find some common principles that connected rhetoric, political strategy and tactics, knowledge of the business of the polis, how to create political networks, etc. The Protagoras that Plato portrays in the *Protagoras* does not seem to have ventured on such a task. And it would certainly have been difficult to establish a secure base for such a science. Here and now, at 318e–319b, he could have said as much. This would, however, have given the game away; he needs to create the impression that his *eubolia* contains secure knowledge.

The other salient point is the ambiguity of the expression "making men good citizens" (*poien andras agathous politas*). Due to the involvement of most free men in the running of the polis and in the handling of other matters relevant to the community, the nature of the good man and the good citizen were assumed, for most practical purposes to be the same, more so than we would be prepared to accept today. They were not supposed to be identical even then, however, and if Protagoras had wanted to, he could have made his own meaning clear. He could have said that he did not teach moral philosophy as such, or the virtues as they pertain to the inner being of individuals, or even to the political community. "I teach success in the polis, and that is that", he could have said. "If my pupils have success, they are good citizens." But that would mean that he had to renounce any strong connection between his teaching and the moral principles that the vast majority of the Athenians thought was the normative foundation of the polis. And that would imply that he gave up his pretensions to superior wisdom. He cannot, then, say that such questions as the nature of each virtue and the way they form a unity are irrelevant for his teaching.

It seems to be to Protagoras' advantage that the ambiguity concerning the relation between good men and good citizens is not cleared up. At this point in the conversation, it is also advantageous to Socrates. He can now situate the discussion

on the abstract level of moral philosophy, and pretend that he thinks Protagoras is comfortable with that. Protagoras has no other option but to go along with this.

Protagoras' Attitude to the Virtues

It is often assumed that when Socrates drags Protagoras into a discussion on the unity of the virtues, he is engaged in a serious ethical investigation where he tries to grasp this unity by means of the question and answer format followed by *elenchus* and *aporia*. These elements are indeed present in the dialogue, but not, I contend, as instruments in a theoretical investigation of the nature of the virtues and their unity. It is rather used for testing the respondent's professional persona and the problematic nature of his attitudes and opinions (McCoy 2008, 61).[8] Socrates' purpose is not even primarily to help Protagoras to understand the virtues better. The aim is to expose what is, from Socrates' standpoint, a wrong and reprehensible attitude to the virtues (and to human values, se next section). Since Protagoras hides, more or less consciously, his real, if confused attitude to morality, Socrates has to expose it. Moreover, by using several narrative devices in addition to Socrates' questioning, Plato displays the social mechanisms that both form Protagoras' moral attitudes and create the necessity on Protagoras' part of concealment and prevarication.

An implication of the interpretation I suggest in this article is that a reading of the *Protagoras* that focuses on the soundness of the exchange of statements and arguments between Socrates and Protagoras in a strict logical sense is less than fruitful. Socrates' questions and suggestions are primarily designed to trap Protagoras into self-exposure.[9] If this is correct, it will be misguided to try to read the *Protagoras* with the intention to identify a theoretically coherent view that Socrates may have on the nature and unity of the virtues.[10]

Socrates' opening move is to pose the question of the unity of the virtues, and he keeps up a steady pressure in order to get Protagoras to admit that they not only constitute a unified whole, but even that they are identical, "or nearly so". At first

[8] Marina McCoy argues "…that Socrates' questions to Protagoras are intended to bring out problems inherent in Protagoras' own ideas…". McCoy's article restricts itself to the hedonism section of the dialogue. I contend that she hits the mark with regard to the rest of Socrates' questioning too. – This article is indebted to McCoy's approach to the *Protagoras*.

[9] It is not even a main concern for Socrates to show Protagoras up as a weak debater, or even as a mediocre thinker. That he appears to be so on both counts is a symptom of the intricacies of his position both as a teacher and of the situation Plato has placed him in here.

[10] Gonzalez (2014, 33–66) argues along the same lines as this paper, but thinks it possible to extract more of Socrates' own thinking than is supposed here. Griswold (1999, 283–307) gives us a somewhat similar take on Protagoras' thinking. He concludes, however, that the *Protagoras* is a failed dialogue. It fails to display fruitful philosophical conversation and little progress is made on philosophical issues such as the unity of the virtues. Yet these failures have much to teach the reader (303). My view is that since the aim of the *Protagoras* is not to try to make progress on such issues as the unity of the virtues, Griswold's contention is beside the point.

sight this could look like a friendly invitation to Protagoras. If the virtues are all very much the same, it would seem that Protagoras' métier had a unity that made it easier to teach, and if this unity in some way was based on knowledge, as Socrates tries to press home, he would seem to play up to Protagoras' pretensions. It is however, a bit more complicated than that. Socrates wants to show that there is an underlying tendency in Protagoras' approach to the knowledge-virtues to let them collapse into each other. On piety, justice and courage, Socrates has more specific aims. He wants to show that they are different from each other in Protagoras' mind in specific ways. Piety thus comes out as quite disregarded, justice as downgraded and courage as un-teachable. It would be too embarrassing for Protagoras to admit any of this. It is necessary for him to pay lip service to conventional wisdom about piety and justice. As for courage Socrates exposes a dilemma; if Protagoras concurs with the prevalent opinions, he must admit that he cannot teach it, and if he admits that, he diminishes his role as a teacher.

If you are a free man in Greece and the talk is of virtue, four or five virtues will be at the tip of your tongue. You will be disposed to think that each virtue is different from each of the other, but that they have something in common, indicated by the word virtue, *arête*. Protagoras talks in this loose vein in the great speech: "… there is one thing, which is justice and temperance and piety – in short what I may put together and call a man's virtue (*andros aretê*)" (324e). He refers to the individual virtues as well as their unity in this casual way throughout the great speech. He first mentions justice and piety as the two virtues necessary for the cohesion of a polis, then *sôphrosunê*, the term for good sense, temperance, moderation and self-control is mentioned in the same breath as the two other. Wisdom, *sofia*, is said to be divided into the sort of wisdom we need to survive, given us by Athena, and political wisdom, bestowed upon us by Zeus (321d). Courage is not directly mentioned as a virtue in the great speech, but pops up in Protagoras' first exchange of words with Socrates afterwards (329e).

Socrates' subsequent questioning follows a long term strategy; a strategy of temptation: to get Protagoras to commit himself to the position that all the virtues are knowledge. One part of this effort consists in making him accept that all the knowledge terms refer to the same thing.[11] Socrates starts with the relationship between *sôphrosunê* and wisdom *(sofia)*. Since each has folly or thoughtlessness (*aphronêsis*) as their opposite, they must be the same.[12] At 330b he lists the virtues, but mentions the *technê*-related ("scientific") knowledge term *epistêmê* instead of the vaguer and more comprehensive *sofia*. Protagoras does not object to this. Later Protagoras says that wisdom (*sofia*) is the greatest virtue. Since *sôphrosunê* and

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[11] The relation between the knowledge terms are revisited several times in the rest of the dialogue. Socrates intention is thus not immediately obvious.

[12] Coby (1987, 77–83) finds Socrates argumentation on this point fallacious. And so it obviously is. It proceeds on the premise that each thing has only one opposite. If it had been of interest to Protagoras to keep wisdom and *sôphrosunê* apart, he could easily have pointed that out. But he is happy with the lack of clarity the amalgamation of the knowledge terms creates; he can then more easily hide the nature of his own "wisdom" from view.

sofia now are the same, and we must assume that Protagoras had accepted the interchange of *sofia* and *epistêmê*, *sôphrosunê* and *epistêmê* must also be the same. As *epistêmê*, *sôphrosunê* too must be a *technê*-like competence then. We will return to this last point later. Our general result so far is that all the knowledge terms are said to connote the same thing, and that this knowledge entity is a virtue, even the greatest virtue.

Socrates now asks Protagoras if he will accept that each virtue has a particular power or function (*dunamis*, 330a, cf. 331d, 333a). Next he asks whether he thinks justice and piety both are something (*pragma ti*) or not something. Why does Socrates feel the need to ask such a question? It seems superfluous, since everyone knows that they must exist in some form or other. Socrates here, in a seemingly innocuous way deftly raises the question of the nature of the existence of the virtues, their ontology, at the same time that he points to the common notion that virtues are powers that function as motives and can be part of a man's character.

Why does Protagoras accept this? Socrates knew, of course, that some sophists and other intellectuals were inclined to think that virtues were *nomos*, rather than *fusis*, conventional rather than "by nature". Most Greeks thought the opposite, and this was firmly asserted in the *paideia*. It meant that you can be a just person, and that if you are just you do just actions, if you are *sôphrôn* you make sound judgments, and so on. Protagoras must have felt that it was too dangerous to challenge the dominant attitudes on this point. That he did not in fact accept them, Socrates will bring out during the rest of the conversation.

If the virtues are conventional, they will to a large degree exist in *topoi*, teachings and discourses. This could mean that they are changeable, susceptible to differences of opinion, and possibly less integrated in a person's character. Even justice, which was so securely anchored in "reality" through the legal system and other institutions, could be seen as mutable, as an expression of convention rather than of *fusis*.

Socrates pretends to want to discuss the precise nature of the virtues and their relations to each other, but Protagoras does not like sharp distinctions and is willing to accept approximations and vague expressions. This is his response to Socrates' suggestion that justice and piety are of the same kind:

> I do not take quite so simple a view of it, Socrates, as to grant that justice is pious and piety just. I think we have to make a distinction (*diaforon*) here. Yet what difference (*diaferei*) does it make? He said: if you like (*ei boulei*), let us assume that justice is pious and piety just…. Well, at any rate [Protagoras] said, justice has some resemblance to piety; for anything in the world has some resemblance to any other thing. (331c–d)

"Anything in the world has some resemblances to any other thing." Protagoras gives examples of similarities, between black and white, hard and soft and several others.[13] He does not mention virtue and vice, but his formulation does not exclude these items from his list. If they too have something in common, the implications

[13] It is tempting to see retorts like this (see also 334a–c) on Protagoras' part, as expressions of the historical Protagoras' relativism. The Protagoras Plato gives us in this dialogue does not, however, seem to be strong on sustained abstract conceptual thinking. Here he seems to take refuge in relativistic notions when he finds himself in a difficult spot.

could be dramatic. Socrates refrains to engage with the problems that open up here, maybe because they will require a questioning on a more abstract level than his strategy calls for.

Piety and justice were referred to in the great speech as the glue of society; virtues necessary for its coherence. There Protagoras gave the Athenians what they wanted to hear. Here too, however, he must have felt that he was on secure ground. The Greeks did think that justice and piety were closely related virtues. Not that they were identical, but it was thought that they often shared each other's qualities. Probably all pious actions could be called just, and many just actions, if not all, could be called pious (Dover 1994, 252 and 164–165).[14]

More pertinent for Socrates' line of argumentation is the relation between justice and knowledge. Protagoras is not ready to admit that justice is knowledge. In the great speech he had stressed the fundamental role of justice in society. Everyone has this Zeus-given virtue: "…all without exception must needs partake of it in some way or another, or else not be of human kind" (323b). However, almost in the same breath he says that *not* all persons are in fact just. Those who are not must use their good sense (*sôphrosunê*) and profess to *be* just. In other words, they should pretend or lie. *Sôphrosunê* – one of the now interchangeable forms of knowledgehas thus to do with how we should act when justice is at stake. *Sôphrosunê* is then not the same as justice. It can be *about* justice while being something different from it. Socrates is set on drawing out the implications of this, especially with regard to the problems which follows from suggesting that *sôphrosunê* takes precedence over justice within the moral realm.

At 329e Protagoras says that there are men who are just but not wise (*sofoi*). As an isolated statement, this seems innocuous enough. If the virtues are independent virtues, you can have justice in you even if you are a simpleminded fellow. Now, when wisdom and *sôphrosunê* have been shown to be the same, Socrates can ask the more challenging question: "…does a man who acts unjustly seem to you to be *sôphrôn* in so acting?" (333b). If you accept that you can, you are saying that you will be able to keep your virtue, *sôphrosunê*, intact while you violate another virtue, justice, through exercising this selfsame virtue, *sôphrosunê*. Here, Protagoras is ashamed to say yes, he says. He is unwilling to admit that this is what he thinks, and he contends that the many (*hoi polloi*) *do* think that, namely that there are men who are temperate but not just. This is a major point in Socrates' excavation of Protagoras' moral attitudes. Since Protagoras had accepted that *sôphrosunê* and wisdom are the same, and that they are a virtue, even the greatest of them all, he seems to be just a few steps from having to admit that his favorite "virtue", *sôphrosunê*, could be used appropriately to pervert justice, and that the man who used it in that way could be wise in so doing.

When would it be correct to act unjustly? To have good sense, *sôphrosunê*, is to be sensible. Being sensible is to be well-advised (*bouleuestai*). Isn't being well-

[14] Dover observes: "The consequence of the tendency towards identification of the patriotic, the law-abiding and the pious is that it becomes difficult to think of any conduct which could attract any kind of 'secular' valuation and yet could not be called 'pious' or 'impious'" (Dover 1994, 252).

advised about faring well? Socrates asks. So if you fare well by your injustice, you are well-advised? (333d–e). Good judgment (*eubolia*) is what Protagoras is teaching, as we remember. It has now become pretty much the same as *sôphrosunê*. This must imply that sometimes you will have to choose between two virtues, *sôphrosunê* and justice. So far it seems that you should then always choose *sôphrosunê*, because that virtue points out what is useful or advantageous (*ôfelima*, 333d), and some acts that are unjust are beneficial. When Socrates questions Protagoras on the relationship between *sôphrosunê* and justice, his aim is not to get Protagoras to accept their unity. He seeks to make visible the specific difference between these two entities in Protagoras' thinking. The difference is one of precedence where justice must give way to the superiority of *sôphrosunê*.

By making Protagoras accept that *sôphrosunê* deliberates about what is advantageous, Socrates gives him a choice. Protagoras can say that deliberation is about what is advantageous for the city.[15] This could mean that he deliberated on just actions, which (with piety) is the main virtue that is good for society (322c–d). Then the just and the advantageous would be the same. Or he can say that deliberation is about one's own good, which we have reason to believe is what he thinks. He tries to get out of this impasse by saying that there are things that are good even if they are not profitable to men. Instead of spelling this out in relation to the soul of human beings, he speaks of what is good for bodies, plants and animals. He is floundering, and in "…a thoroughly provoked and harassed state, and …he was dead set against answering any more," according to Socrates (333e).

However, after the Simonides-intermission, seemingly out of the blue Protagoras says that "…wisdom, *sôphrosunê*, courage, justice and piety are parts of virtue and that while four of them are reasonably close to each other, courage is completely different from the rest…" (349d). He now admits, then, that *sôphrosunê* and justice are "reasonably close". If this had been more strongly expressed in the direction of identity, *sôphrosunê* would not have been able to override justice and be used to legitimize unjust acts. Protagoras does not want to close the gap between *sôphrosunê* and justice that was contained in the formulation "…a man who acts unjustly [could] be *sôphrôn* in so acting" (333b). He wants to cover up the moral problem that becomes obvious when its implications are spelled out, which was what Socrates was about to do when Protagoras became harassed and refused to answer. He probably thinks that his somewhat vague new formulation would not make this obvious, and in any case a long time has passed since they started on Simonides' poem, and he could hope that everybody has forgotten what he said before that.

Instead of continuing where they left off, Socrates now focuses on Protagoras repeated insistence that courage is vastly different from the rest of the virtues. He follows his strategy to maneuver Protagoras as close to the identity of the virtues as possible with knowledge as the common denominator, in order to bring out morally suspect contradictions in his position.

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[15] Woodruff (2013) contends that Protagoras' *eubolia* is about what is good for society. Woodruff thinks that it is answerable to the virtues. I think that *eubolia* in Protagoras practice is committed to the *values*.

Courage is a tricky subject for Protagoras for several reasons. He needs to shunt it aside in as much as possible. When he first mentioned the generic concept of virtue (*arête*), it included piety, justice and *sôphrosunê*. He calls this ensemble a man's virtue (*andros aretên*). Courage was first and foremost considered a martial virtue, however, and this was what most Greeks would first associate with the expression 'a man's virtue'. Protagoras mentions the art of war at 322b, without mentioning courage. The art of war (*polemikê*) is here called a part of the social or political art (*politikên technên*),[16] which seems like giving courage a subordinate role. In the life of most of the persons present, especially the young Athenians, courage had a more central position. They would perhaps be curious about the role this virtue would play in Protagoras' teaching. When he eventually, and emphatically for once, professes that "…boldness (*tharsos*) comes to a man from art (*technê*), or from rage or madness, like power (*dunamis*), whereas courage comes from constitution (*fuseos*) and fit nurture (*eutrofias*) of the soul" (351a), he is giving expression to prevalent notions. But alas, it follows that courage is not a topic that Protagoras could teach. Finding it shameful to say anything else on this subject than most Greeks would accept,[17] he is forced to delimit the range of his competence in the discipline of "making men good citizens". In his new formulation, the role for knowledge (as *technê*) is in the teaching of boldness, which has to do with the use of weapons and the like, hardly a métier the sophists could claim to master.

He would, however, probably encounter questions from students about the role of courage in the political life they wanted to enter into. We remember that he recommended that people should lie – from *sôphrosunê* – when in danger of being caught out as unjust or in breach of any other civic virtue (323b). He could well have passed on to his students that the main thing was to *appear* courageous, as in the case of justice. He does his best to appear courageous himself. In his presentation of himself in the beginning of the dialogue, he refers to the old culture heroes who had been cautious, in that they did not admit to have practised *sofistikên technên*, out of fear of ill will. He, on the contrary, presents himself frankly and openly as a sophist. This looks like courage, until we see his reasons. The earlier sophists were mistaken; their disguises resulted in what they wanted to avoid. When he, Protagoras, chooses another strategy, it is because it is more expedient. Implicitly, if it had been smarter to give a false impression, he would have done that.

He tries to use his *sôphrosunê*/*eubolia* throughout in his conversation with Socrates, but in spite of all his caution, it constantly results in contradictions, prevarications, irritation and refusals to answer. This is hardly courageous, but it is *sôphron*. To act courageously would be detrimental to the aims he has set himself;

[16] "So *aretê*, the abstract noun corresponding to *agathos*, was often applied …to that combination of bravery and skill which we looked for in a fighter, …" (Dover 1994, 164).

[17] This goes for the aristocracy as for the many. According to Denyer (2008, 173), it was commonly acknowledged that there could be unwise people who were courageous.

acquiring students and bolstering his reputation. So here *sôphrosunê* trumps courage too.[18]

What Is It to Live Well?

When Socrates sees that Protagoras will not budge, but sticks to the notion that courage is not knowledge, he suddenly changes the topic. He asks what it is to live well (*eu zên*) (351b). The question of aims and values in life is thus raised. Why is Socrates doing this? He pretends that the reason is that he seeks a new angle from which he can overcome Protagoras' stubbornness on the question of courage.[19] In the Greek *paideia*, however, the virtues on the one hand and the aims and values on the other were considered – however vaguely – to belong to different areas. You were supposed to cultivate the virtues regardless of the aims you set yourself in life and of the things and concerns that you were most preoccupied with. The virtues laid out a prescribed pattern of conduct, which placed restrictions on your ambitions. If you sought power, or if you were in a position where you could use force, you should keep within the bounds of justice, for instance.

When Socrates now brings in aims and values, he will show that Protagoras makes the virtues subservient to aims and values, to the point of their disappearance. He thinks that his interlocutor takes virtues to be a decidedly minor part of the moral economy as a whole. He also wants to show that the *sofistikê technê* that Protagoras claims to be his métier, would need a strong element of calculation (like other *technai*), in order to make young men politically successful.

As with the virtues, Socrates embarks on a strategy of reduction.[20] It turns out that all aims and values are for the sake of pleasure. Health, the preservation of cities, dominion over others, and wealth are all sought for the pleasure these goods give us, Socrates says. "And are these things good for any other reason than that they end at last in pleasures and relief and riddance of pains? Or have you some other end to mention, with respect to which you call them good (*agata*), apart from pleasures and pains?" (354b). Protagoras thinks that one cannot find any. We would suppose that Socrates, for his part, would think that one of the tasks of wisdom was to reflect on the moral worth of the different aims and values that people pursue,

[18] It is easier for Socrates to appear courageous. Since he is not soliciting paying students, he can say the most outrageous things. – Whatever the exact kind or amount of knowledge Socrates could find in courage, it would be strange indeed, if he would deny that it must have an element of boldness, or what you want to call it, that makes you stand up for a worthy cause and risk the consequences.

[19] "I fancy, I replied, that this will be a step towards discovering how courage is related to the other parts of virtue" (353b).

[20] Which also includes a reduction of the number of moral terms. Socrates suggests that they should "…refrain from using a number of terms at once, such as pleasant, painful, good and bad; and as there appeared to be two things, let us call them by two names – first good and evil, and then later on, pleasant and painful…pleasure – for this has exchanged its name for 'the good' (355b–c).

where pleasure is one. In the scheme he has attributed to Protagoras, this (philosophical) work is no longer necessary. Pleasure is a self-evident natural and final aim.

Something has happened to the word good (*agaton*). Before 351a, when Socrates started his "investigation" about aims and values, 'the good' had played a modest role. It was briefly connected with the useful (*ôfelima*) at 333d–e. It was not mentioned as something that has to do with the nature or unity of the virtues. After 351a, the term appears several times as a companion of pleasure and other values. The goodness of pleasure is emphatically stated, for instance at 354c. This indicates that the moral focus has changed from 'good character' to 'the good things in life'.

The best life is a life where you get the maximum amount of pleasure you can obtain. For that you need measurement. Measurement is a *technê* and a form of knowledge. Socrates now draws on his earlier treatment of the knowledge terms. We remember that he made *sofia*, *sôphrosunê* and *epistêmê* interchangeable. Now *epistêmê* is highlighted and Socrates makes some strong statements in praise of its power. It is a guiding and governing (*archikon*) thing. *Epistêmê* alone is now supposed to rule over our actions. Socrates:

> …do you consider that knowledge (*epistêmê*) is something honourable and able to govern man, and that whoever learns what is good and what is bad will never be swayed by anything, to act otherwise than as knowledge (*epistêmê*) bids, and that *sôphrosunê* is a sufficient support for man. (352c)

Protagoras finds that this is spot-on, and for once there seems to be no hidden disagreement and no fear of being shamed:

> My view, Socrates, …is precisely that which you express, and what is more, it would be a disgrace (*aischron*)[21] for me above all men to assert that wisdom and knowledge (*sofían kai epistêmên*) were anything but the highest of all human things. (352c)

The amounts of pleasure that different actions can give us can be accurately calculated, compared with each other, weighted against pains, and the economy of short time versus long term pleasures can be precisely computed. *Epistêmê* now appears as the art of measurement (*metrêtikê technê*, 356d). "…the art which saves our life is measurement…" (356e). And this is a *technê kai epistêmê* (358b).

Protagoras had professed to teach his students *eubolia*, good deliberation or judgment. He did not explain what kind of competence he thought it to be. It is not among the virtues that he mentions. He did not protest when Socrates called it a *technê*, a *politikê technê* (319a). After 319a it is not mentioned again. I venture the suggestion that Socrates in his reconstruction of Protagoras' moral philosophy has the latter's *eubolia* in mind when he comes up with his "*metrêtikê technê*", the art of measurement.

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[21] *Aischros* is a wider word than *aidôs*. It could mean disgraceful, shameful, and scandalous. And it could be opposite of *kalos*, noble, which connects to honour. See Dover (1994, 70). Shame in Protagoras' case has often to do with honour. At 348b Alcibiades says that Protagoras is not acting honourable (*kalos*) when he refuses to go on with the discussion. "Then Protagoras was ashamed (*aischuntheis*) as it seemed to me, at these words of Alcibiades…" Socrates says.

"…there is nothing stronger than knowledge, …it has always the upper hand of pleasure and everything else…" (357c). This and similar statements in the *Protagoras* has been widely used as evidence for the intellectualism of Socrates. The statement does not, however, follow from the argument. For it is pleasure that is the strong, and the governing power. *Metrêtikê technê* is the means to its gratification. Socrates ironically depicts *metrêtikê technê* as a virtue, but even if it were, it would have little *dunamis*, as the virtues were supposed to have at 330a.

> Come my good Protagoras, uncover (*apokalupson*) some more of your thoughts: how are you in regard to knowledge (*epistêmê*)? Do you share the view that most people (*tois pollois anthrôpois*) take of this, or have you some other? The opinion generally held of knowledge is something of this sort – that it is no strong (*ischuron*) or guiding (*hêgemonikon*) or governing (*archikon*) thing; it is not regarded as anything of that kind, but people think that, while a man often has knowledge in him, he is not governed (*archein*) by it, but by something else – now by passion (*thumon*), now by pleasure (*hêdonê*), now by pain, at times by love (*erota*) and often by fear; their thinking (*atechnos dianooumenoi*) about knowledge is just what they have about a slave, that it may be dragged about by any other force. Now do you agree with this view of it, or do you consider that knowledge (*epistêmê*) is something honourable (*kalon*) and able to govern man, and that whoever learns what is good and what is bad will never be swayed by anything, to act otherwise than as knowledge (*epistêmê*) bids, and that *sôphrosunê* is a sufficient support for man. (352b–c)

If *epistêmê* is not governed by anything else, its power must be self-generated, coming out of its own nature. But now pleasure has been described in this way. There is a contradiction here, between the contention that *epistêmê* is in charge, and the promotion of pleasure as our natural motivation for the good as well as our final aim. If pleasure is our basic motivational force, *epistêmê* must be dragged about by pleasure, it must be a slave, to use Socrates' term. The role that remains for *epistêmê* is calculation. One could say, of course, that correct calculation rules over wrong estimation, and that *epistêmê* therefore has a role in deciding actions. It is nevertheless a handmaiden of the good, in other words, of pleasure. As such it serves a supposedly moral function, but in itself it is devoid of moral content; it is a machine that calculates amounts of possible gains in given situations.

What about piety? Shouldn't piety be saved from this denigration of traditional virtues? In the great speech piety is with justice the central civic virtue, together they are the glue in society. One could therefore expect Socrates to attend to it more than he does. He gets Protagoras to admit that it is nearly the same as justice, and that is about it. We must, however, assume that the "rule" given at 323b applies to pious actions as to "…any other civic virtue…", namely that we should pretend to be virtuous even if we are not. And this is what Protagoras does. He cannot afford to be exposed as impious. There is in fact many allusions to piety in Protagoras performance, both in acts and words. Why was it so necessary for him to pay heed to piety?

Piety was first and foremost reverence for the gods. But since the gods gave men laws and rules, written and unwritten, this virtue applied also to the respect and veneration that was due to the basic cultural mores of society (Dover 1994, 247). Piety was, then, an important and a politically sensitive virtue. There is little in the text that suggests that Protagoras harbours this virtue in a genuine sense. Even if we

suppose that it is his honest opinion that it works as a glue in society, he could very well find it *sôphron* to circumvent it or manipulate it for his own purposes. It will still function as a glue if people in general internalize it. His hypocrisy on this score becomes apparent in his attitude to shame, the flip side of piety. You were supposed to feel shame if you transgressed rules for pious behaviour. This is the shame Hippocrates feels when he reddens at the thought of becoming a sophist.[22] There is another kind of shame, however, which can occur independently of this, the universal psychological shame that we feel when we are caught out and risk losing face. Here the gaze of the other is decisive, without which we may not feel shame at all. This is Protagoras' kind of shame.[23] Sometimes, however, one gets the impression that neither of these two types of shame is operative, and that some of his references to what is shameful is a way of making excuses for not speaking up candidly. He hides hypocritically behind the piety of the Athenians.

All Socrates' maneuvering has eventually reached its goal. That no one acts wrongly willingly stems from a deep desire of our nature, a desire for pleasure that is good as well as strong. Moral wrongdoing can be reduced to acting on a misguided notion of how to achieve a maximum amount of pleasures. Only ignorance (*amathia*) then, could stop you from doing what is right. Since Socrates has imputed to Protagoras a calculating and teachable method to overcome ignorance, the expertise of the sophist will cover the whole of the moral field.[24]

Prodicus and Hippias, as well as Protagoras, give their assent to all this. "They all thought that what I had said was marvelously true" (358a). There is something strange about this enthusiasm. There is little evidence for the supposition that Protagoras himself has pleasure as a superior value. On the contrary, there are many indications that he seeks honour and renown[25] before anything else. He seems to like money too. So why should he accept Socrates' *spiel* about pleasure? I think that Socrates' ironical response to the many, those who cannot calculate, at 357e gives us the answer:

> To "be overcome by pleasure" means just this – ignorance in the highest degree, which Protagoras here and Prodicus and Hippias profess to cure. But you, through supposing [wrongdoing] to be something else than ignorance (*amathia*), will never go yourselves nor

[22] That Hippocrates' blush is an expression of an internalized sense of shame, something like what we in our culture could call guilt, is indicated by the fact that the only person present is Socrates, and that he can see it because the morning light has just made it possible. – Paul Woodruff names piety 'reverence'. He discusses this rather complex virtue in Woodruff (2014).

[23] It can be shameful to loose in a verbal contest, even if what you have said and done in the competition is not shameful in itself.

[24] At 354c Protagoras says that he agrees with the many that you cannot find any other candidate for the good than pleasure. He tries half-heartedly to make a place for the honourable (351c), but Socrates ignores that, and so closes an avenue that the young ambitious men could have found promising.

See also Denyer (2008, 195) on the ambiguities in the text concerning what the Protagoras and the two other sophists assented to during Socrates' questioning of the many.

[25] At 335a he refers both to his great renown and to his fear of losing his contest of words with Socrates.

> send your children to these sophists, who are the teachers of these things – you say that it cannot be taught; you are chary of your money and will give them none, and so you fare badly both in private and in public life.

By including Prodicus and Hippias, Socrates indicates that there is more at stake here than Protagoras' personal convictions. He aims at the nature of the teaching of the sophists in general, or at least one type of their teaching practice.[26] It may be that not even Prodicus could resist Socrates' ascription to him of teaching omnipotence, especially since he is reminded of how he earns his money. But what about the rest of the audience? Plato presents what he must have intended to be a more or less typical prospective student of Protagoras in the person of Hippocrates, but he also gives us a greater crowd of people, representative of the kind of milieu where his teaching normally took place. Several young men probably keen to get on in politics are present, including two sons of Pericles, as well as a very young Charmides and one Philippides, from a rich family. Antimoerus is a foreigner who is studying to become a sophist under Protagoras, and there are other strangers and Athenians that are followers of him. Eryximachus, in his late teens, Phaedrus in his early teens, and a very young Andron from a rich family are all sitting with Hippias. Here too there are unnamed strangers and Athenians. Pausanias and Agathon, which we know from the *Symposium*, both young, two men both called Adeimantus, at least one of them young, and some others are sitting with Prodicus.[27] A young Alcibiades and a bit older Critias (known from the *Charmides*) arrive later.[28]

And then there is the host, Callias, coming from a powerful aristocratic family and soon to become the richest man in Athens when his old father dies. His brother is also present. The family wealth came from silver mines, worked with slave labour. Callias has family ties with Pericles, Alcibiades and Plato. His clan managed the rites at Eleusis, and Callias was number two in its priestly hierarchy. He was a student of Protagoras, as well as of Hippias and Prodicus. He was a young man at the dramatic date of the *Protagoras*. Debra Nails writes: "At this point in his life…[his] ambition was to make himself wise by buying a sophistical education" (2002, 70). A few years later his first scandal happened, and there was a steady supply of them

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[26] Plato presents Prodicus together with Protagoras as a "teacher of these things" in the *Republic* 600c. He was, however, mostly known as a teacher of the precise meanings of words. He makes a distinction at 337c between being comforted, or cheered (*euphrainoimetha*) and being pleased (*hêdesthai*). The first has to do with learning something and becoming sensible (*manthanonta ti kai phronêseôs*), while the latter has to do with eating and "some other pleasant sensation in his body". This distinction is disregarded by Socrates, who throughout his conversation with Protagoras has been bent on destroying distinctions in the field of moral discourse and on simplifying its vocabulary. Hippias seems to have thought ethics and rhetoric among his sundry activities. For both, see Nails (2002).

[27] Socrates may give us the information that the three famous sophists each had their own students around them in order to show that Protagoras' pre-eminence and reputation was not so secure after all. He first gets everybody's attention when a contest between him and Socrates is decided on. He would naturally have seen this as an opportunity to solicit the students of his rivals for himself. This motive could have made him even more cautious than otherwise would be the case.

[28] Information on the men present in addition to what the dialogue itself gives is taken from Nails (2002).

for the next 40 years, until he had squandered his fortune. He was a butt of writers of comedy, where he was exposed as wasting money on women of different social standings and on *symposia*.[29] He lived with his wife and her mother at the same time. He perjured himself by denying fatherhood of an illegitimate son. Because of such behaviour, he was often sued, and he had to pay large sums in compensation to offended parties.

Callias' house, "this veritable hall of wisdom, …this greatest and most august house of the city itself",[30] could be seen as a perfect venue for a eulogy to pleasure. The hedonist-part of the dialogue must have been appreciated by Plato's first readers as a deeply ironical homage to the man who lusted so excessively both for pleasure and for sophists.[31]

When Callias frittered away his vast fortune, it could not, according to the hedonist logic, be because he had committed himself to the wrong values. Ban the thought! The reason had to be that he was unable to calculate correctly. All the money he had paid the sophists had been wasted, then; they had not been able to teach him the *metrêtikê technê*.

Callias' subjection to lust can, however, hardly be the only reason for Socrates' choice of pleasure as the highest value. For Callias is not representative of the audience on this point. Protagoras himself values honour and renown highest, and this would probably be the case for most of the persons present, especially the young aristocrats. It would have been difficult for Socrates, however, to find another value that could be given a semblance of calculability. There is a certain plausibility to the idea that pleasure is measurable.[32] And the "method" can work in an analogical manner, instilling a calculating and instrumental attitude. Even if successful action cannot be calculated exactly, it helps if we are not distracted too much by considerations of virtuous behaviour, especially of justice. Deviousness, for instance, is often useful. We remember that one should never admit to an unjust act. To do so was not *sôphron*, not recommended by *eubolia*. One *should*: the calculating practice is made normative.

Arlene W. Saxonhouse contends that there is a divide between the upper echelon of the Athenian citizenry and the people at large, the so-called many (*hoi polloi*). On a social and economic level, this is undoubtedly true. There are differences of political interest and mistrust between these layers of society, as well as elitist arrogance towards the demos. Saxonhouse writes about the men in Callias' house that they "… are driven by a desire for the individual glory that is in conflict with the ideology of equality governing the city in which they live" (Saxonhouse 2006, 186).

[29] Callias' life is used by Davidson (1997) to illustrate the social and political dimension of all kinds of pleasure and of the hard going for the virtue of moderation in classical Athens. – Davidson mentions that he was satirized as *pornomanês*, 'whore-mad' (1997, 162).

[30] Hippias' words at 337d.

[31] Nails has 433/2 for the dramatic date. We don't know the date of writing, but it must be after Socrates death in 399. Callias lived from about 450–367/6 according to Nails (2002, 309).

[32] Jeremy Bentham, as we know, thought it perfectly believable.

In spite of this, efforts to identify any deep ideological conflict between the two social groups have hardly been successful. The democratic discourse of the demos dominated political ideology, and there where *one* hegemonic moral teaching, only challenged by philosophers and sophists and some other intellectuals (Ober 1989, 338–339).[33] Protagoras will teach a political practice that differs from the prevalent notions of morality and politics, and yet he will present it as a continuation and an improvement on tradition.[34] A lot of his caution, his fretting about his security and his fear of being shamed, can be explained in this way. It is important to him that both his approach to and the implications of his teaching should be non-transparent. It is exactly this opacity that Socrates sets out to penetrate.

Protagoras finds his audience and his students among the elite. His several expressions of disdain for the many are seemingly well received in Callias' house (Stokes 1986).[35] At 333c he is ashamed to admit that you can be unjust while *sôphrôn*, and he is ashamed *because* that is what the many says. He seems to think that the many have shameful notions, and that he must disapprove of these notions for that reason. The fact is that both the many and the elite thought that those who are *sôphrôn* are also just (Denyer 2008, 133).[36] Protagoras is guilty of another grave misrepresentation in his comments during Socrates' long "conversation" with the many at 352b-358a. Here – taking Socrates' bait at 352b – he is led to agree that the many hold the opinion that our knowledge is dragged about by pleasure, passion, pain, love and fear. Nicholas Denyer again sets the record straight: both the elite and the many thought so, as we can gather from many instances in the dramas (Denyer 2008, 182–83). By misrepresenting the opinions of the many on this point, however, Socrates makes it easier for Protagoras to accept the contrary view; that *epistêmê* reigns supreme. Protagoras tries to create an ambience of exclusivity and a bond between himself and the present members of the elite, by signaling a distance to the many, giving the impression that there is nothing vulgar in *his* teaching.[37]

To a large extent Protagoras' deviousness, his tendency to hide himself, his evasiveness and his constant apprehension for his own safety, can be explained by his

[33] "It was arguably the failure of the elite to control political ideology that led them to devise and write formal political theory which would explain what was wrong with the system they failed to dominate" (Ober 1989, 338–339). One interesting text in this connection is The Old Oligarch's constitution of Athens. Robin Osborne write in his Introduction: "The overall argument of the work is that although democracy may not be good absolutely, good for the wealthy, or even good for the *polis*, it is nevertheless good for itself." (The Old Oligark 2004, 17) The author has to admit that democracy works.

[34] This would be in tune with the drift of the great speech too.

[35] Stokes writes that "Protagoras has the makings of an intellectual snob" (Stokes 1986, 197).

[36] Referring to Xenophon and Isocrates, Denyer writes: "Popular opinion held the opposite, speakers could expect audiences to agree without argument that those who are temperate are just" (Denyer 2008, 133).

[37] Hemmenway (1996, 2) presents Protagoras' attitudes thus: "Demotic virtue, mainly for the many, is simple-minded restraint and law-abidingness. It produces civil order and is primarily associated with the cardinal virtues of moderation and justice. Elite virtues, for the few, consist of daring and cleverness. It is the instrument of political success and it is primarily associated with courage and wisdom."

profession. His first presentation of himself at 316c–317c, indicates this connection. He has to be careful, he says, since he will probably meet resentment and hostility. He then declares that all the poets, other artists, sportsmen and craftsmen have been sophists, a fact they disguised out of fear. He, on the other hand, finds this foolish, because it did not work. *He* calls himself a sophist, and "brings himself into the open", because this works better. He calls this a precaution, and he takes other precautions as well. He is thus wiser than they were, since he has calculated the best way to come into a city without creating hostility. One hides oneself if it is convenient to do so. At the same time as he claims to be wiser than his "forerunners", he gives vent to his ambition for honour and renown. He stands on the shoulder of former culture heroes, but he is the wisest of them all, wisest being *sôphrôn*, as we now know; the best to analyse the situation, and to calculate alternative outcomes.

In sum I think that there are three main factors that constrain and give direction to Protagoras' thinking: (1) Teaching for money. Socrates refers to this several times. If he was the first to do so as Socrates claims (349a), he inaugurated a social practice, we might perhaps call it an institution. Beside the institution of selling wisdom for sex, we now also get one where one sells wisdom for money. If you sell wisdom for money, however, you must of necessity give weight to the interests and specifications of the buyer, and *he* makes his order with his intended use of the commodity in mind.[38] (2) Protagoras had to take into account current opinions, and show respect for the established *paideia*. (3) He had to be protective of his reputation. This seems to be a strong personal concern, but not only. Without renown as a wise and successful teacher, he would have fewer students and less money. Reputation was a business asset.

Conclusion

Virtues in Plato's dialogues are always discussed with reference to the good soul. Aims and values must in the end also be approached from this angle. They may not be morally problematic; they may be neutral. If they are not there will always be moral questions to consider. A chosen aim or value should not be allowed to diminish your capability to develop one or more virtues. Some values and aims are, moreover, intrinsically morally suspect. Power, for instance, should be treated carefully, not only for the hazard it represents for the good of one's own soul, but also because the dangers it entails for the virtuous life of others.

In the moral world that Socrates has attributed to Protagoras, the structure is quite different. Here the values and aims are hard normative facts, or rather one fact,

[38] In his unsuccessful attempt to warn Hippocrates from approaching Protagoras, Socrates mentions money 11 times (311b–e). See also 328b, 349a and 357e. For the topic of wisdom vs. money in the *Protagoras*, see Nightingale (1995, 48–49). Nightingale discusses this theme and makes a point of the difference between the sophists (and Protagoras especially) and Plato: "For wisdom and money, in Plato's view, operate in totally different spheres" (49).

pleasure, and the virtues, such as they now are, stand in an instrumental relation to them. Let us look at some implications.

The virtue-words may now designate terms for fields of actions, rather than universal entities which can be developed as qualities of character.[39] Thus, courage can be mentioned when there is danger present, justice when there is occasion to meet one's obligations or for making laws and rules, piety when religious rites is to be performed. In all these fields, however, the same *sôphrosunê*/*eubolia* should be put to work. It calculates what gives the greatest amount of pleasure. The same logic would have been operative if we had chosen another value, such as money, power, or honour. The best choice could be made, even if we stopped using or thinking of the virtue-words.

Would it matter whether a person is virtuous or not? Not much, for now the moral universe has contracted considerably; value, situation and calculated advantage are, for most practical purposes, all there is.

Both from the point of view of philosophy and from Athenian democracy, the sophist Protagoras is the one who corrupts the young. For both Socrates and the Athenians share the notion that the virtues are the moral nexus of both character and politics. By his teaching of mercenary practices, Protagoras thus subverts the established *paideia*, but also Socrates' conception of moral problems. Socrates engages in a thoroughgoing analysis and criticism of prevalent and unexamined moral attitudes in several dialogues. But this is not the purpose of the *Protagoras*. Here he wants to show the objectionable nature of one kind of sophistic teaching. This places him closer to democratic thinking, compared with Protagoras' teaching. The issue here, however, is not democracy versus tyranny. Protagoras is a democrat, maybe a personally convinced democrat, too. This could have something to do with the fact that this form of government works to his advantage. No other regime could give such a wide scope for his chosen métier. This space, however, becomes even greater if the citizens are a bit impious, a bit unjust, a bit cowardly, quite a bit hedonistic, and very keen on success.

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[39] Moderation and self-control which traditionally were parts of *sôphrosunê*, have disappeared from the text. It is not easy to see this part as divorced from character, in contradistinction to the part highlighted in the conversation between Socrates and Protagoras, sound deliberation, which could easier be perceived as a competence unconnected to moral character.

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The Treatment of Virtue in Plato's *Protagoras*

Hayden W. Ausland

The Investigation of Virtue

Socrates is said to have turned philosophy away from the attempt to explain the phenomena of nature and toward human affairs, toward what came to be called the practical philosophy consisting of ethics, economics, and politics. His inquiries characteristically centered on some problem of definition, a term here to be understood both logically, as mark of scientific precision, but, more importantly, also practically, as a kind of moral focus or clarity. The latter sense is the more important in that the former is sought eventually for its sake. Xenophon explicitly attests to this ethic, including several instances in the Socratic conversations he relates, as for instance Socrates' discussion with the sophist Hippias on the nature of law. Several Platonic dialogues are designed on the same model. The *Hipparchus*, for instance, plunges at its outset *in medias res* with the question, "For what is love of profit?"[1]

Several of Plato's Socratic dialogues seek in this double sense to define special virtues like courage or temperance; a well-known case is the *Euthyphro*, which explores the nature of piety and is often read together with the other members of the first tetralogy (*Apology of Socrates, Crito*, and *Phaedo*). In this dialogue, Socrates' initially self-confident interlocutor initially appeals to a fabulous action of Zeus, an *exemplum* (παράδειγμα) in the traditional sense; it is in this sense, and not in the modern one often mistakenly read into the text, that Euthyphro offers an example, or, more precisely, an exemplary case, calling it a "proof" (τεκμήριον).[2] Socrates too is seeking an exemplar, but he wants one that is always and everywhere applicable

[1] Cf. Arist. *Metaph*. A.6 987a29–b9, M.4 1078b9–32 and *EE* I.5 1216b3–11 with Xen. *Mem*. 4.6 and Plato, *Hipparch*. 225a1–4.

[2] See [Arist.] *Ad Alex*. 9 1430a14–16. On the difference between the traditional and Aristotelian senses of this rhetorical term, see Ausland (2002, 53–55 with notes 37–38).

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in cases of piety, and the model provided by Zeus' action against his own father, although a plausible model for Euthyphro's action against his father, is inapplicable to other kinds of pious actions. So he asks instead for a self-same form (ἰδέα or εἶδος) to which he can instead look as his exemplar (παράδειγμα). Socrates hereby does not so much extend, as confirm, a primary meaning of the last term.[3]

One or two other dialogues pose the same kind of question on a more general level. Thus in the *Meno* we see Socrates trying to focus an inquiry upon the nature of virtue as a whole. When his interlocutor at first offers him a series of alternatives: the virtues of a man, of a woman, of a child (both male and female), and of an older man (both free and slave), Socrates replies that he has been presented with a *smenos* of virtues when he asked for only one. The Greek word Socrates uses (σμῆνος) is almost always translated into English simply with "swarm" (so, e.g. Jowett in 1871 and many others since), a term that can readily suggest a confusing plurality congregating in some apparently disorderly fashion. But it refers in Classical prose primarily to an already organized beehive, and only secondarily to a mass of bees swarming prior to forming a new hive.[4] That it is meant in its primary sense in the *Meno* is clear from the immediate sequel, when Socrates pursues the comparison by distinguishing the differing kinds of bees from the essence (οὐσία) of bees as such.[5] The differing kinds of bees are defined with reference to their function (or lack of function) in the greater hive, which recalls us to the fact that Meno's list of human virtues was governed by a differentiation of roles and corresponding functions standard within an ancient Greek household (cf. Arist. *Pol*. I.2 1252b9–18 and I.3 1253b1–8). The household is the human organization managed by the art of economics, just as the city is managed by the political art. Socrates does not object to a definition of virtue that comprises the various virtues needed within the home and city, but he evidently wants it framed in general terms that have the same applicability to all such variations on the theme of human virtue.

But the "What is . . . ?" question is not the only way in which Socrates is represented as pursuing moral definition more broadly conceived. In numerous conversations Socrates pursues this via related pathways, entertaining questions differing in logical form, e.g., Which is the better way of life, the just or the unjust? On more than one occasion, however, he reminds his interlocutors that answering qualitative

[3] See [Arist.] *Ad Alex*. 8. 1429a21–27, comparing the criticism at Arist. *Metaph*. A.9 991a20–22 (=M.5 1079b24–26), but also Cicero *Orator* 2.7–3.10.

[4] LSJ, s.v. σμῆνος. Sydenham rendered it more expressively than later translators: " I think myself much favoured by Fortune, Meno; for, when I was only in quest of one virtue, I have found, it seems, a whole swarm of virtues hiving in your mind." (1804, Vol 1, 39) With the exception of Burges (1850, 5), subsequent renderings appear to have adopted the term "swarm" without regard to its context, or meaning within beekeeping.

[5] The same term is used in reference to the object of definitional inquiry at *Euthyphro* 11a6–b1, but to make a somewhat different contrast between the intrinsic essence (οὐσία) of piety that elicits the gods' love, and the feature true of it constituted by their act of loving it conceived passively (πάθος). It goes without saying that neither this nor the distinction made in the *Meno* is quite the same as Aristotle's later influential distinction between being *per se* and *per accidens*. See *Metaph*. Δ 9 1017b27–1018a11 and cf. Fujisawa (1974, 30).

questions of this kind presupposes knowledge of the prior question what the underlying subject of discussion – here, justice – itself is.[6] Plato's *Protagoras* is one of several dialogues built around secondary moral questions of the kind just mentioned, in this case two apparently interrelated questions: (1) Can virtue be taught? and (2) Is it one thing or many?

The question whether virtue can be taught arises out of another "What is . . . ?" question: What it is that Protagoras teaches? This question itself surfaces first in a preliminary conversation between Socrates and Hippocrates, in the course of which Socrates brings the youth to the realization that it is hazardous to pay for unknown wares that one carries away from the merchant already lodged within one's soul. Their discussion begins with Hippocrates' expressing his wish that Protagoras might make him wise, for which he would be very willing to pay. Induced by Socrates' questioning, Hippocrates makes it clear that he expects that, as a sophist (σοφιστής), Protagoras is one who is knowledgeable (ἐπιστήμων),[7] and more particularly, one in authoritative command (ἐπιστάτης)[8] of the elements of wisdom pertinent to making someone clever at speaking (δεινὸς λέγειν).[9] It ends when Socrates asks him relative specifically to what a sophist can turn him into one clever at speaking, at which the youth admits himself at a loss for an answer.

According to Meno, Gorgias taught people how to be clever at speaking (*Meno* 95c3f.). By one clever at speaking we are perhaps to understand one who is able to work any within a full range of effects on an audience by means of his clever speech. Thrasymachus of Chalcedon seems to have been such a man, for "he was, as he said,

[6] Cf. *Rep*. 1. 354c1–3 with *Meno* 71b3f. and *Prot*. 360e6–361a3.

[7] Denyer (2008, 75) holds Hippocrates mistaken, since "the ιστ of σοφιστής is in fact quite different from the ιστ of ἐπιστήμων" – perhaps relying upon Adam and Adam (1893) or Towle (1889), who effectively translates Sauppe's 4th. edition of 1884. But Hippocrates does not offer an etymology from ιστ in ἐπιστήμων. Heindorf (1810) had been characteristically more careful in noting that σοφιστής is in this passage is evidently derived "from the words σοφός and εἰδέναι, as if ὁ τῶν σοφῶν ἴστης be a σοφιστής ", and comparing *Cratylus* 407c, where Ἥφαιστος is derived from Φάεος ἵστωρ. ἴστης (Heindorf's hypothetical agent-noun) and ἵστωρ ("investigator", "arbiter") derive from ϝιδ, the stem of οἶδα and εἰδέναι (the connection is most readily seen in some personal finite forms like ἴσθι and ἴστε). Heindorf's explanation recurs in numerous later nineteenth century commentaries and is the implicit background for the abbreviated notes of Sauppe and Towle. In his 3rd. edition of 1873 Sauppe added *Cratylus* 406b (Ἄρτεμις from ἀρετῆς ἵστωρ), after which Kroschel (1882, ad loc) gave the implied etymology explicitly (ὁ τῶν σοφῶν ἵστωρ), adding the parallel at *Sophist* 221d. Thus Hippocrates' explanation of the ιστης element is best understood as suggested by the immediately preceding term of discussion, εἰδέναι, which he then *explains* in terms of ἐπιστήμη. That the latter term has ιστη in it as well may help him along, but it is not Hippocrates' main point. See also the next note.

[8] Plato's reason for having Hippocrates use ἐπιστήμων may be so that Socrates can capitalize by quickly transforming discussion of an ἐπιστήμων (from ἐπίσταμαι, "know") into the more technical notion of an ἐπιστάτης (from ἐφίστημι, "stand over", "be in command of", "oversee"). Both verbs appear to combine ἐπί and ἵστημι, but they will have arisen at different times and in different ways. Scholars offer various theories about the formation of ἐπίσταμαι, but that there should an additional compound form of this kind with a more figurative meaning is a phenomenon seen with other Indo-European verbal stems as well.

[9] Cf. 310d2–e7 with 312d3–7.

at the same time clever both at inducing anger in many men, and, once they were angry calming them down again with his charm."[10] Modern scholars usually classify Thrasymachus and Gorgias as sophists. But is this sufficiently precise? Within the Platonic corpus, Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias, and the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are all consistently called "sophists", and – although they have their differences – they share some key features, chief among which is that they in one way or another professionally engaged in teaching what we may provisionally call virtue (which I will use to translate the Greek word ἀρετή).[11] By contrast, Thrasymachus, Gorgias, and their hangers-on Clitophon and Polus are not, as a rule, referred to as sophists – and neither are Critias or any of several other figures included in modern lists of members of a hypothetical late fifth century "movement".[12] In the *Gorgias*, Callicles calls sophists and their teaching of virtue "worthless[13]" (*Gorg*. 520a1f.). The men he is hosting at his home and presumably admires seem better described as rhetoricians. Nor do they profess to teach virtue – apparently Gorgias even expressly denies that he does and ridicules those who profess to do so (*Meno* 95b9–c4). A measure of indistinctness may be useful to both professions, and perhaps it is sufficient for the present purpose to distinguish two kinds of sophist, one professing to teach virtue and the other professing rhetoric (see Brandstaetter 1893, 204f.). In any case, given the differences between the two kinds of men, whom most modern scholars too lump together rather indiscriminately as "sophists" (see *Gorg*. 465c1–3), young Hippocrates may be mistaken in thinking that Protagoras will for a fee turn him into one clever at speaking. He may instead try to teach him virtue.

On the other hand, if Hippocrates assumes that the wisdom of a sophist is in some regards not unlike what Socrates in the *Gorgias* calls rhetoric (ῥητορική is nowhere mentioned in the *Protagoras*), he might not be entirely off the mark. A long series of humanistic thinkers including Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian trace the command of political affairs to what one learns as a matter of course in learning how to be an effective speaker, when the latter task is approached properly. Their fuller contention, in effect, is that being a good statesman comes with being a fully good man, which is in some real sense identical with being a good orator.[14] If Protagoras is in any measure to be credited with instituting the tradition these

[10] ὀργίσαι τε αὖ πολλοὺς ἅμα δεινὸς ἀνὴρ γέγονεν, καὶ πάλιν ὠργισμένοις ἐπᾴδων κηλεῖν, ὡς ἔφη · (*Phdr*. 267c8–d1).

[11] *Prot*. 318a6–9, e5–319a2; Xen. *Mem*. II.i.21–24; *Hipp. Mai*. 283c2–5, 286a3–287c3, and *Hipp. Min*. 363a1–c3; *Euthyd*. 273d5–b1.

[12] See a useful discussion in Corey (2002, 26–112, an argument necessarily somewhat qualified in reference to Gorgias in particular at 279–289).

[13] *Gorg*. 520a1f. In response to this, Socrates says that a sophist is the same as a rhetor, or something close and approximating to it (520a6–8), recalling the comparison he developed earlier, in conversation with Polus (463e5–466a3).

[14] This is in general terms the main argument of Cicero's *De Oratore*. Cf. Isocr. *Antid*. 278, Quint. *Inst*. 2.15.1 and 33, and Cato Maior *apud* Seneca Maior, *Controv*. 1.9: *orator est . . . vir bonus dicendi peritus* ("The orator is a good man skilled in speaking.") On Aristides, see Hubbell (1913, 63f.).

successors represent, then he may have taken this same general position. Thus Hippocrates might on some level legitimately grasp what Protagoras teaches – although he may still suffer confusion between speaking effectively with a view to a private end (cf. [Plat.] *Def*. 413a8f.) and speaking effectively with a view to what is best, a confusion it will be useful to illustrate next.

The historian Thucydides attributes to the Athenian statesman Pericles an effective public speaking-style that one might at first sight wish to assimilate to Thrasymachus' claim to be able to control the mood of a crowd. "Whenever he [sc. Pericles] saw them [sc. the Athenians] inopportunely carried away with arrogance, he inspired fear in them with his words, and again, when they were unreasonably afraid, he restored them to boldness."[15] But an important difference lies in the qualifications "inopportunely . . . with arrogance" (παρὰ καιρὸν ὕβρει) and "unreasonably" (ἀλόγως). Thrasymachus does not seem to have delimited the ability to which he laid claim in any such terms. What separates Pericles from Thrasymachus is the former's habit of getting the Athenians' worked up or calmed down in a way that was in either instance *rationally appropriate to the occasion*, rather than the product of arrogant boldness or irrational fear. To moderns accustomed to thinking of excellence in public speaking as effectiveness in a supposedly "value-free" technique, this difference can seem but a volitional accretion of some kind. But to an ancient way of thinking it was intrinsic to the activity itself. What Pericles possessed was not only the ability to offer effective counsel to an emotional crowd, but the ethic of doing so in a way directed at the true interests of the members of that crowd, even – and perhaps especially – when they failed to understand their own true interests.[16] This is more than a mere capacity; it is a virtue, and the Greeks (as they say) had a word for it: *euboulia* (εὐβουλία).[17]

Which brings us to Protagoras himself. After Socrates and Hippocrates have arrived at Callias' house, and Socrates asks the sophist what the outcome will be for Hippocrates though associating with him, he answers that the young man will daily become "better" (βελτίων). When Socrates presses him to specify in more substan-

[15] ὁπότε γοῦν αἴσθοιτό τι αὐτοὺς παρὰ καιρὸν ὕβρει θαρσοῦντας, λέγων κατέπλησσεν ἐπὶ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι, καὶ δεδιότας αὖ ἀλόγως ἀντικαθίστη πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ θαρσεῖν (2.65.9).

[16] As an indication of a modern difficulty in appreciating this difference, one may note how these two passages are compared in Edmunds (1975), where the passage from Plato is adduced to show that Pericles was under the influence of late-fifth century intellectual tends. Edmunds appears to notice no significant difference between the two statements. But perhaps he has it backwards, and Thrasymachus in fact represents a corruption of a traditional conception of responsible public address that Pericles' still embodied. In reference to the particular case under discussion, Thucydides refers to Pericles' having sought to "free (παραλύειν) the Athenians of their anger against him and to draw their thought (γνώμη) away from the fearsome things present to them" (2.65.1). On the qualitative decline to be seen in his demagogic successors at Athens, see the statement at 2.65.9–10 that directly follows the one quoted in the previous note and cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol*. 28.

[17] Given anachronistic discussions of deliberation in neo-Aristotelian circles, it is necessary to mention that deliberation is here not to be understood as concerned with determining ends, but, according to its traditional understanding, with assessing means to given ends. See Tuozzo (1991) and Bonaunet (2009).

tive terms what it is Hippocrates will learn, he at first answers, "The lesson is favorable counsel (εὐβουλία) concerning one's own affairs, how one might best manage one's own household, and concerning the affairs of the city, how one might be most capable in acting and speaking in civic affairs."[18]

Although εὐβουλία can evoke a poetic-rhetorical concept of deliberative planning in the light of "likely" comparisons of a kind sometimes made with a view to addressing situations of uncertain outcome, odds are against any interpretation of it succeeding that begins from a modern notion of "probability", which seems to have originated in the sixteenth century under the influence of then novel ideas about mathematically determinable likelihood.[19] For the ancients, that something should be likely or probable meant, correspondingly, one of two complementary things: that it resembled something true (εἰκός cf. Latin *verisimile*), or that it would move the approbation of an audience (πίθανον cf. Latin *probabile*). A well-crafted "likely story" could in principle hit both marks by rendering probable to an audience what reasonably approximated to reality. As a virtue assuming recognition of this principle, favorable counsel, while something falling short of scientific exactitude, was nevertheless recognized as a rational basis for proceeding in the realm of human practice, where mathematical exactitude is not to be had.[20] At the same time it maintained a certain connection with the higher world of things known only to the gods, insofar as it was conceived of as having to be brought to bear in connection with

[18] 318e5–319a2. Paul Woodruff has developed a novel interpretation of the concept of εὐβουλία as "defeasible reasoning" that has appeared most recently in a contribution to an anthology of 2013 on the thought of the historical Protagoras. Woodruff has thought about the question for some time (cf. id., 2008, comparing 1994, 116f. and 130–135), and can appeal to some estimable work on Thucydides as a basis (In 1994, he refers to Gommel 1966 passim and Hunter 1973, especially 23–31). With reference to Protagoras' use of it in this dialogue, one may acknowledge that it has to mean more than the cleverness at speaking that Hippocrates seeks without accepting the reason Woodruff gives for saying this. It seems mistaken to suppose that that expertise in verbal persuasion is of no use in household affairs because Greek households were managed despotically – or for that matter, under tyranny because tyrants manage their realms tyrannically. In trying to understand ancient political and economic phenomena, one should beware of assuming modern ideological stereotypes. That persuasion was for the Greeks of importance in the context of any organized human interactions may be gathered from a reading of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, the classic work on household management, in which the elder Cyrus is held up as a paradigm of the commander due to his ability to command his troops' *voluntary* obedience even faced with terrible circumstances (4.19), and Socrates himself is shown listening to a perfect Athenian gentleman's explanation how he set his own household on the right path by conversing rationally with his young wife about their complementary roles and duties, among which numbered speaking effectively to servile members of their shared household (4.1–10.13; cf. Arist. *EN* 6.5 1140b7–11). That Rousseau, Marx, and their various followers have led so many to think of all such relations as variants of Hegel's "Master-Slave" has distorted their accurate understanding, in effect re-barbarizing the Greek view. (cf. Arist. *Pol*. I.2 1252a34–b9) One might as well say that bees are all by nature equal but have been forced by contingent institutional facts to obey the orders of a queen.

[19] See Hacking (1975), whose conclusions would seem seriously qualified in Franklin (2001, but cf. a new "Introduction 2006" in Hacking's 2nd edition, note 21 with text above).

[20] cf Arist. *EN* I.3 1094b32–1095a13 and *Metaph*. α 3 994b32–993a20. The latter passage makes explicit (at 995a14–16) that it is matter (ὕλη) that compromises mathematical precision. See also *Anal. Post*. 1.27 and [Plat.] *Def*. 413c3.

virtue rooted in natural principles.[21] To view the same facts from a slightly different perspective, as a virtue of sorts based on a cognizance of the rhetorical principles of "occasion" (καιρός) and "the appropriate" (τὸ δέον), favorable counsel maintains a connection with the order of Zeus as subject to the rhythms of good and bad fortune. The larger idea comes to sight discursively already in the poetry of Homer,[22] but is accorded characteristically compact expression in a fragmentary Paean of Pindar:

> τὸ δ' εὐβουλίᾳ τε καὶ α[ἰδ]οῖ ἐγκείμενο[ν] αἰεὶ θάλλει μαλακαῖς ε[ὐ]δίαι[ς·]. (fr. 52b.52)
> What is planted in good counsel and reverent restraint blooms ever in weathers gentle and fair.

In order to understand the political meaning of this gnomic verse, one must know from its context within the poem as a whole that the fair weather mentioned is an image for freedom from *stasis*, internal political strife, while the virtues of *euboulia* and *aidos* are conceived of as civic virtues, with the latter approximating to citizen courage.[23] That the Abderites, who are at war with Thracians, should observe a distinction between friends and enemies is not an arbitrary matter, since, as Pindar makes clear in related ways, one's "friends" and "enemies" are in principle the friends and enemies of Zeus and his order.[24] The older poetic conception was taken up and modified by the more sophisticated literature of classical historiography and tragic drama, where it exhibits features interesting for a political analysis.[25]

The Platonic Protagoras' invocation of this complex older idea does not occupy center stage for very long, however. Prompted by Socrates, he swiftly acknowledges that he means "the art of politics" (τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην) productive of men who are good citizens (ἄνδρας . . . ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας).[26] The sense in which Hippocrates will

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[21] For Platonic applications of these, see *Timaeus* 29c4–d3 and *Critias* 107d5–e3 and 108d1–7, respectively. Cf. *Phaedrus* 259e7–260a7, 267a6–b2, and 272d1–273a1, where, however, the polemical character of the discussion renders hazardous taking it as a definitive statement of Socrates' – much less Plato's – view.

[22] See Schofield (1986), which offers some useful observations on the notion's use in Homer, marred by a contrast with an intellectualist construct he attributes to Plato.

[23] [*euboulia* and *aidos*] "are . . . civic virtues, and the latter when valor in war is seen to depend on reverence for family and city and the desire to be held in like reverence by the community, comes very near to the meaning of *andreia*" (Bundy 1954, 10). It is, accordingly, in some such light that Protagoras' introduction of the term preparatory to his myth of Prometheus may be viewed: "What prompts a man to undertake labor in preparing for the games is *promatheia* (cf. *I*.1.40), the essence of *euboulia* (cf. N.1.26–28. πράσσει γὰρ ἔργῳ μὲν σθένος, βουλαῖσι δὲ φρήν, ἐσσόμενον προϊδεῖν συγγενὲς οἷς ἕπεται.), and *aidos* which prompts *philia*. These virtues are aspects of *dika*" (Bundy 1954, 46). On *aidos*, cf. Erffa (1937), who notes the continuity in Pindar with a Homeric conception (76f.).

[24] See Bundy (1954, 100f.) and. cf. *Rep*. 1. 334c1–335b1.

[25] See Hesk (2011), who builds on Hall (2009).

[26] Idiom and word order combine to render the phrase together with ποιεῖν nicely ambiguous. Denyer follows some earlier commentators (e.g. Adam and Towle), who construe Ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας as forming a single expression, on the basis of parallels like Ar., *Equ*. 1304. This would suggest a translation like (A) ". . . produce good citizen men". But the phrasing can at least as conveniently be read as a double accusative, in which case the dependence of the centrally placed adjective ἀγαθούς can be on either Ἄνδρας or πολίτας (Kröschel 1882, ad loc). In the latter case,

gain from his association with Protagoras, then, seems that he will become a good, or at least a better, citizen. Since "good" and "better" are adjectival ways in which Protagoras has spoken of what he will impart to his students, it is a natural enough step when he and Socrates both begin speaking of favorable counsel, or the political art, also in grammatically substantive terms as "virtue" (ἀρετή – used first by Socrates at 319e2).

That virtue should be spoken of as an art jars the modern understanding, which has inherited the medieval Christian view of virtue as rooted in volitional factors, and under the influence of the enlightenment tends to regard art as in principle free of moral constraints. But this is not how any ancient Greek explained either of them. To go by what Aristotle says at the outset of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, every art was conceived of as aimed at some good, and virtue was evidently to be conceived along similar lines. Prior to Augustine's introduction of a human will as the decisive factor in moral matters,[27] there seem to have been observed two main differences between human virtue and the arts: their differing degrees of specialization, and the fact that virtue governs practice (*praxis*) but art production (*poiesis*). While the latter distinction will surface in the thought of Aristotle, only the former becomes thematic in the dialogues of Plato, including the one before us. This is something we may here stress without going into its details. The simple fact is that, for all the scholarly talk of a supposedly fallacious "craft-analogy" in Plato's Socratic dialogues, and the concomitant speculations about responsibility for it – some prefer to blame it on the

we get (Bi) ". . . render men good citizens"; with the former, (Bii) " . . . render good men citizens". On may add that in theory, it might even be translated (Biii) " . . . render citizens good men". And there might be a point to any of these. (Bi) would suggest that Protagoras takes men as his raw material and, like a craftsman, "makes" good citizens by informing them, say with εὐβουλία. But (Bii) could better answer to Hippocrates' assumption that he teaches a man primarily how to speak effectively in public. Lastly, since Protagoras professes to teach virtue as such, not only civic virtue, according to (Biii) he would be claiming the kind of thing he explains more clearly at 328a8–b3 (cf. Simonides at 339b1, and the educational ideals mentioned in *Laws* 1. 643e3–6 and Arist. *Pol*. 8.14 1333a11–16). The word order argues somewhat against (Biii), and (Bii) fits less well with the immediate context. So the main syntactic ambiguity at least on the surface is between (Bi) " . . . make men good citizens" (so Bartlett) and taking Ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας as a unitary predicate for an implied object: (A) " . . . make [sc. those who come to you] good citizen men" (see Sauppe, ad loc.). Note that ποιεῖν used in such a construction most likely means "render" (requiring a double accusative) rather than "produce" (requiring only a direct object), so that translating with "produce" is here only to help get around supplying the ellipse in an English translation. The situation is somewhat different at Ar. *Equ*. 1303f, where Ἄνδρα μοχθηρόν πολίτην occurs in explanatory apposition with the indefinite subject (τιν') of an infinitive of indirect discourse: "They say that a certain person requires a hundred of us for Chalcedon, a rascally citizen, sour-tempered Hyperbolus" (Hickie).

[27] See Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1.xii.25–1.xiii.27, where the conclusion reads: *AUGUSTINUS. Iustitia restat, quae quomodo desit huic homini non sane uideo. Qui enim habet et diligit uoluntatem bonam et obsistit eis, ut dictum est, quae huic inimica sunt, male cuiquam uelle non potest. Sequetur ergo ut nemini faciat iniuriam, quod nullo pacto potest nisi qui sua cuique tribuerit. Hoc autem ad iustitiam pertinere cum dicerem, approbasse te, ut puto, meministi. EUODIUS*: *Ego uero memini et fateor in hoc homine, qui suam bonam uoluntatem magni pendit et diligit, omnes quattuor i uirtutes quae abs te paulo ante me adsentiente descriptae sunt esse compertas.*

sophists, others on Socrates, and others on Plato himself – for all this talk, we can find no character anywhere in Plato's dialogues who ever explicitly calls the analogy into question, much less on any such grounds. A very few scholars have seen the implication of this, but in such cases, even these (e.g., Adkins) rather excuse than understand it, by referring to special ways in which the Greeks viewed such matters (see Adkins 1973, 5f.). But perhaps our own modern prejudice about the analogy is the peculiar way of viewing it, and the way in which Plato has Socrates and Protagoras and others speak of it is the natural way of doing so. For the present purpose, it will be necessary to leave it at assuming, rather than seeking to demonstrate this alternative. The remainder of what is to follow will accordingly not be troubled in the least by discussion of virtue presupposing that it *is* an art of some kind. As it happens, moreover, this is just the way it is treated by Socrates and Protagoras, who are in apparent agreement on the point. Where they can be seen to differ is on its degree of specialization, and, in a way somehow connected with this question, its susceptibility to being taught.

At the same time, it is worth noting how gradually the at least quasi-technical aspect of virtue is brought out in the dialogue. In specifying what he wants from Protagoras, Hippocrates nowhere uses terms corresponding to English "expertise", "competence", "craft", or "art"; he says that Protagoras is wise (σοφός) and that he wants to be wise himself. Nor does Socrates in developing his first induction at 318b4–d4 call the medical Hippocrates or the two sculptors "craftsmen" (δημιουγοί), or their activities "crafts" or "arts" (τέχναι) – as he does, for instance, at the beginning of his criticism of Polemarchus in *Rep*. 1. 332c5–d6. The first mention of τέχνη and δημιουγός in the dialogue came back at 312b3, where Hippocrates, reacting to the ungentlemanly connotations of these terms, immediately expresses *relief* at the thought that he is *not* trying to acquire an art. One may add that speaking in terms of "knowledge", "knowing" and "knower" (ἐπιστήμη, ἐπίστασθαι, ἐπιστήμων) arises only after this and independently, as a result of Hippocrates' etymological explanation of σοφίστης.[28]

To what does the term ἀρετή refer? In trying to answer this question, it is useful to remember the older corresponding verb (ἀρετᾶν), still found in Homer, which means something on the order of "thrive" or "prosper".[29] Already in the preliminary exchange between Socrates and Hippocrates, a distinction was premised between

[28] 312c6. Cf. notes 7 and 8 *supra*.

[29] For the idea filled out somewhat, see Herod. 1.30.3–5. Attempts to classify meanings of the noun antecedent to its use in Plato have had divergent results. In a relatively rigid developmental scheme, Koch (1900) sought to isolate three main senses, characteristic of (1) Homeric and early lyric or dramatic poetry, (2) Hesiodic and elegaic poetry, and (3) the philosophers. These he dubbed, respectively, the "epic", "political or popular", and "philosophical" meanings of the term. Koch was promptly and sharply criticized by Ludwig (1906), who saw a rather greater variety of meanings operating at all stages of its development. Interpretations of Protagoras' use of the term, which is confusing to many moderns, tend to assume that he himself confuses differing meanings (so Adkins 1973, 9f. followed by Taylor 1991, 71; Irwin 1995, 79; Kahn 1996, 217f.). In explicit contrast with these, Weinstein (citing Morrison 1941, 8 as a precedent) holds that the sophist employs these deliberately for eristic purposes (2000, 33f.).

studying under a sophist with a view to acquiring the art of sophistry oneself, and studying under a sophist with a view to a liberal education.[30] Hippocrates with some relief professed the latter interest out of a sense of shame he felt when confronted inductively with the former possibility.[31] That political art, or virtue should be accessible to men (or at least, free men) generally in a way that the special arts are not is something that seems to have bothered Socrates, whom we are informed irritated powerful men by saying it seemed odd to elect political leaders by lot when one would never do so to identify an expert needed for some task requiring art (cf. Xen *Mem*. 1.2.9). It is in some such terms he frames the first of two difficulties with which he confronts Protagoras in his claim to teach virtue.

The second relies on the way supposedly great men like Pericles fail to educate their own sons to the same greatness. If virtue can be taught, why should either of these phenomena come about? Protagoras says he will not begrudge Socrates an answer, and, after some preliminary consideration of the kind of discourse he should use, begins a lengthy speech.

A cautionary note is here in order. Referring to Protagoras' answer to Socrates as his "great speech" has become an ingrained habit. At the same time, writers will often signal some discomfort with the designation, whether by placing the phrase within quotation marks, or by referring to Protagoras' "so-called great speech". Sorting out the merits requires some Prodicus-like fine-tuning of terminology. In English-language Platonic scholarship, the practice just mentioned grew out of a sub-heading in Gregory Vlastos' Editor's Introduction of 1956, which – like so much else Vlastos thought and wrote – was an adaptation of some older continental scholarly fashions. But a problem arises here. In German, *eine grosse Rede* might refer either to a lengthy speech or a speech of some moment. But in 1950s American English, at least, a "great" speech can mean only the latter.[32] When German scholars of the nineteenth century spoke of Protagoras' *grosse Rede*, they normally meant that it was a long speech. The thought that it might also be a speech of some moment grew up only with the reassessment of the sophists' "contributions" to a supposed historical development viewed in the terms of progressive science, or politics. At the very outset of his thereafter life-long project of subjecting the Platonic Socrates to cross-examination, Vlastos characteristically appropriated this newer side alone of an originally more ambiguous German usage.[33] Uses for a while continued somewhat hesitant (so Gallop 1964, 117; Gagarin 1969, 141), but over half a century later both

[30] For the distinction between an art practiced as such and its task of transmitting its technical principles to a new generation of practitioners, see *Clit*. 409a4–c1.

[31] For the differing levels of dignity of different kinds of art – all of which are nevertheless arts – cf. *Symp*. 203a4–6 with *Alcib. I*, 130e8–131b9 (where see some illustrative or parallel references in Denyer's edition, ad loc.).

[32] For an older British use see *Journal of Public Education* (1906).

[33] An index to the gradual influence of Vlastos' English phrasing can be gathered from the fact that R. S. Bluck mentions it in his edition of the *Meno*, 4 years later (1961, 366, ad 92e4; cf. Sesonske 1963, 75), after which Victor Ehrenberg adopted it in his book *From Solon to Socrates* (1968, 272). Ehrenberg meant partly to indicate that he thought it a speech of some magnitude, historically. By contrast, his earlier book *Sophocles and Pericles* (1954) contained no such mention or use, despite

the origin and broader implications of Vlastos' English usage seem long since to have been forgotten.

This entire tendency, quite aside from such ambiguities, is likely to be misleading for another reason. Protagoras' reply to Socrates is never referred as a "great speech" in any sense within the dialogue itself. Socrates does afterward draw a distinction between Protagoras' speaking at length and the dialectical style of conversation he prefers, but in speaking of Protagoras' *makrologia*, he is certainly not implying that it is anything of moment. That Protagoras might think it so is probable enough: he is the acknowledged "dean" of the "sophistical movement". But in terms of contemporary Greek idiom, Socrates is saying something like "Protagoras is running on at the mouth".[34] In addition, there exists some evidence, albeit slight, that the historical Protagoras may have written a work that at least in later antiquity passed under the title *μέγας λόγος* (*megas logos*, literally "large account"). This phrase need not but certainly can mean "grosse Rede" in the sense of "great speech" or "speech of some moment". A scrap of information we have indicates that Protagoras will have written or spoken in his "mega-discourse" to the effect that instruction requires nature and practice, and that one must learn beginning in youth, i.e., in wholly conventional terms perhaps in some way tangential to the discussion the literary figure in our dialogue has with Plato's Socrates about the possibility that virtue can be taught (see Shorey 1909, 189). Here it is necessary to mention that no few scholars have held that Plato derived the reply he assigns his literary character more or less directly from a supposedly pre-existing work of the fifth century written by the historical Protagoras. Such wishful thinking has regularly sought to identify Plato's hypothetical source with some lost work of Protagoras that has been reported to us by title. The titles usually cited in this regard do not include the *Megas Logos*, however; these are normally either καταβάλλοντες [probably sc. λόγοι], i.e. "arguments throwing [sc. an opponent] down" or περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως, "on the arrangement in the beginning" (Protag. frags. B1 and 8b D–K). In any case, given what has just been outlined, it seems best to abandon the tendentious and by now unreflective practice of calling Protagoras' answer to Socrates' doubts his "great speech".

What are we to call it, then? The text of the dialogue makes it abundantly clear that it is an example of demonstrative rhetoric, an ἐπίδειξις. By the time Aristotle writes his *Art of Rhetoric*, epideictic will be one kind of rhetorical speech (ἐπιδεικτικόν, *demonstrativum*), coordinate with two other kinds: forensic (δικανικόν, *iudicale*) and deliberative (συμβουλευτικόν, *deliberativum*). In Aristotle's *Analytics*, a distinct term, ἀπόδειξις, will by contrast be used to refer to what would now be called logically rigorous proof. This term too has on good linguistic grounds been translated "demonstration", thereby creating a problem for those wishing to distinguish it from epideictic, or demonstrative rhetoric. In Plato's

its embrace of an older hypothesis that a Protagorean composition underlying the speech gave Sophocles the materials for the second *stasimon* of his *Antigone*.

[34] When the Eleatic Xenos uses μακρός to characterize what must be one of the shorter speeches on record, "Theaetetus sits" (*Soph*. 263a2), we may understand him to be using irony.

dialogues, a terminological distinction between rhetorical and logical proof is less well fixed, but still noticeably present. When Socrates invites Protagoras to "display" (ἐπίδειξον 320c1) how virtue is teachable, the sophist understandably takes this to mean that he is to deliver a rhetorically persuasive display speech, an ἐπίδειξις. This is what he then does, announcing it as such (ἐπιδείξω 320c3), and Socrates marks its end accordingly (ἐπιδειξάμενος 328d3). At the same time, when we find Protagoras punctuating what he has to say at its mid-point with a reference to what he has thus far "proven" (ἀπεδείξαμεν 325b5), we should attend to the special character of certain probative constituents within what is primarily an epideictic speech.

Before beginning his answer, Protagoras first asks whether it should take the form of a fable (μῦθος) or a reasoned argument (λόγος), and then, when invited to please himself, he announces a fable, but eventually moves to argumentation as well. To judge from other examples either actually or fictionally authored by Prodicus and Hippias, that a prominent role should be given a mythical element is characteristic of such displays. The practice derives from that of Greek poets, who regularly employ mythical examples in illustration of rationally framed precepts. It can also be compared with a presumably older technique in Aesopian fables (μῦθοι), which embody an obviously fictional story in prose form meant to convey a rational "moral" (ἐπιμύθιον) (see Aphth. *Progymn.* 1). The mythical part proper of Protagoras' ἐπίδειξις is designed to make persuasive his claim that virtue can be taught. About mid-way through his speech, however, he moves to answer Socrates' second point by explaining how it is that prominent men can nevertheless have sons who remain undistinguished, announcing that he is now using rational argument, rather than myth. His palpably mythical exposition ended somewhat earlier, however. In between is a section in which he offers what he calls a "proof" (τεκμήριον). By this term he may mean a proof in support of a claim that cites a fact of some kind the existence of which is incompatible with the denial of that claim – this is the sense the term will later have in Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*. However this may be, the general method Protagoras employs in his display speech (ἐπίδειξις), is then, as follows: (a) fable (μῦθος), followed by (b) proof (τεκμήριον), followed in turn by (c) rational argument (λόγος).

Question (1): Can Virtue Be Taught?

Protagoras addresses the first main question of the dialogue with a fable according to which Zeus "distributed" political virtue to men quite generally, and thus in a way distinct from the way other arts had been allotted them. This may mean that Protagoras has to walk a fine line, allowing justice and temperance to all men in principle, while claiming a special ability to facilitate their perfection of these arts. But is this not what any teacher does in the context of general, as opposed to specialized, education? At many institutions, there exists a tension between the votaries of a liberal education and the denizens of professional "schools" – Business, Law,

Journalism, and the rest. The problem, from the point of view of a devoted humanist, is not that a college education is being reduced to a learnable art – we still speak of the liberal arts, after all – but rather that subordinate arts like journalism are being accorded administratively a status coordinate with that of a properly liberal education. As in this case, so too in the *Protagoras*, the initial tension is between specialized and unspecialized arts, not between art itself and virtue somehow differently conceived.

It is only against such a background that a further conflict can arise between different contenders to the title of the unspecialized art. Who is really providing a liberal education? To ask whether it is Socrates on the one hand or "the sophists" on the other is too simple; Protagoras is at pains to distinguish the education he provides from the spuriously "liberal" one offered by competitors such as Hippias.[35] While this competition bears a certain similarity to one depicted in the *Gorgias*, it is not exactly the same. In the *Protagoras*, the conflict takes shape in terms of a contrast between two kinds of discourse: the question-and-answer dialectic preferred by Socrates and the longer speeches in which Protagoras excels. Both have their roots in oratorical practice: the former in the cross-examinations practiced in forensic situations, and the latter in the longer periods characteristic of all three genres of rhetoric. Plato finds imaginative ways to employ both in his dialogues, but Socrates for some reason seems to have chosen the former as the primary method for his moral inquiries.

One will hear and read of the "cardinal" virtues as treated by Plato, and the problem connected with this that these seem to be five in the *Protagoras*, when they are only four in several other dialogues. The term "cardinal" is attested first in the writings of St. Ambrose (IV saec. A.D.), where its intended meaning remains unclear. One might perhaps better employ the term "political", following Plotinus (*Enn.* 1.2.1). In any case, a corresponding set of four main virtues can be traced back through Cicero and the Stoics of Hellenistic times to Plato's *Laws*, where this standard set of four was conceived as falling into a hierarchy, descending from prudence through justice, temperance, and lastly courage.[36]

As an exception to the general rule, Plato's *Protagoras* can be read as espousing a doctrine of five main virtues, with piety added to the usual four. This would be significant from the standpoint of the later Christian tradition, according to which the four cardinal virtues are to be distinguished as a group from the three more narrowly "theological" virtues of St. Paul: faith, hope, and charity. Plotinus likewise observes an analogous distinction between "political" and divine, or "purgative"

[35] For liberal arts practiced illiberally, see *Rep*. 7. 530e3–531c8, and Ar. *Nub*. 201–205.

[36] See *Laws* I, 631c5–d2, where the virtues are already set out in the same "natural" order (prudence, justice, temperance, courage) normally found in reports of the later Stoic teaching (*SVF* 1.190, 3.262, 264, 266, al.). Cf. Shorey (1933, 624, ad loc). The *Republic* puts the same four virtues to work in a decidedly different way peculiar to its own argument, but this arrangement seems to have had little or no influence over the later tradition; see Ausland (2013, 12f.).

virtues.[37] But one may doubt whether the *Protagoras* assumes so hard and fast a division.

One may likewise doubt another division into two kinds of virtue of more recent origin. This could appear to have some basis in the text, since, in questioning Protagoras initially about the unity of virtue regarded as a whole, Socrates appears to assume a potentially longer list of virtues of which he cites only three – justice, temperance, and piety – as representative. Socrates takes all three from the terms in which Protagoras has framed his mythical argument that virtue can be taught, according to which men at an early, technical stage went about building shrines to the gods, and then somewhat later received righteousness (δίκη) and reverence (αἰδώς) from Zeus, terms subsequently glossed by Protagoras himself with justice (δικαιοσύνη) and temperance (σωφροσύνη).[38] Wisdom enters the dialogue as one among the other main virtues only later on, where we find it accompanied by courage. That wisdom and courage should come subsequently in the discussion has encouraged a tendency to modernize the conception of virtue in the dialogue by postulating a distinction between "competitive" and "cooperative" virtues (or "values"). The writer introducing this framework into the analysis of ancient ethical speculation was A. W. H. Adkins (1960), who, like his teacher Kenneth Dover, seemed most comfortable explaining the classics in the terms of modern categories of social analysis. This particular distinction has an instructive history. "Cooperative virtue" was a slogan of the Progressive Education movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an offshoot of pragmatism faddish among sympathetic educational administrators after WWI. "Competitive virtue" was a phrase used to describe individual or industrial success, and so seems to have been adopted as foil by proponents of the more collectivist ideal. The hope that "progressive education" in "cooperative" virtues might supersede an older system of "competitive" virtues led naturally enough to imagining some such progress as having been played out in the Greece of the distant past. Given its origins, conceptual apparatus of this kind seems ill adapted to shedding light on any meaning intended by Plato in the *Protagoras*, and is rather more likely to obscure it, and so will in the present discussion be left entirely aside.

At the same time, there is presumably some reason why three of the five principal virtues discussed in the dialogue are introduced before the other two are. One might be inclined to compare the assignment of courage and wisdom to specific classes or kinds of soul in the *Republic* (so e.g. Strauss 1971, 10.3f.). But temperance is there located in a harmony between all three civic classes of men, and justice in each class' keeping to its own task. Neither of these requires that each of these classes then exhibit temperance or justice – much less that every member of each of the three classes will do so. The argument of the *Protagoras*, moreover, gets by without a tripartite psychology, and the sophist offers the rather different view that all the citizens must in some sense possess justice and temperance in order for there

[37] On later Platonists' subordination of these to other higher, purificatory virtues, see O'Meara (1989, 40–44).

[38] See Erffa (1937, 195) who holds that the older terms are here used in their Hesiodic senses.

to be a city at all[39] This assertion in its dramatic context has led to the historical Protagoras' being called the first theoretician of democracy.[40] The case for such an estimate rests on a hypothesis that the speeches Plato puts in Protagoras' mouth are in one way or another faithful to teachings of the historical Protagoras. But even when thinking only of the fictional character, some caution is in order here, especially given the enthusiasms peculiar to our own times that this topic arouses. The terms δημοκρατία ("democracy") and δῆμος ("people") do not occur in the dialogue. But οἱ πολλοί (literally "the many", but semantically "most people" or "the majority") are introduced prominently into the discussion by Protagoras on two occasions. His first mention of them is in decidedly dismissive terms, in explaining past sophists' reticence to admit their profession: these sought to escape the notice of the men exercising power in the cities, "since the many 'sense nothing' but harp on whatever things these men may report" (317a4–6). It is conceivably as a challenge to the attitude implicit in this remark that Socrates later wonders why Athenians are prepared to entertain any citizen's opinion on political questions.[41] Again, later in the dialogue, when Socrates is preparing to refute Protagoras' view that courage is distinct from wisdom, he asks the sophist whether he counts the courageous bold or something else, and Protagoras replies: "[Yes, bold] – and moreover liable to approach things most men (*hoi polloi*) are fearful of approaching." Socrates starts to develop an argument with this premise, but a more attentive Protagoras is this time able to call him out on his logical procedure,[42] thereby necessitating a new tack.

[39] For the distributions of temperance and justice in *Republic* 4, where the latter is specified as the *sine qua non* of the other virtues, see Ausland (2013, 11–14).

[40] Seminal in this regard is Menzel (1910).

[41] 319b3–d7, recalled by Protagoras at 328c2f. Cf. Thucydides 2.37.1.

[42] 350c6–d2. Socrates had framed his key premise oddly and so somewhat ambiguously: Πῶς οὖν, ἔφην ἐγώ, λέγεις τοὺς ἀνδρείους; οὐχὶ τοὺς θαρραλέους εἶναι; (349b6f.) In contrast with the questions flanking it, which use the article only with their subject expressions, by seeming to use it with both a subject and its predicate, this double question obscures an invalid conversion Protagoras will shortly identify. Deuschle sensed this (1861, ad loc; cf. Kroschel 1882, ad loc), but Deuschle-Cron (1877, ad loc) went a different way, trying various justifications, contextual and grammatical, for the second occurrence of τούς – an endeavor maintained, if significantly curtailed, in Deuschle-Bochmann (1895) and Nestle (1910). Sauppe adopted a third approach; interpreting the premise implied by the received text as οἱ ἀνδρεῖοί εἰσιν οἱ θαρραλέοι and finding the second occurrence of τούς unjustifiable by its context, he held that one must either omit it, or read τούτους (1873, ad loc). Already Ast (1819, 95) had translated as if the text had the demonstrative (*Quosnam igitur*, *inquam*, *dicis fortes*? *nonne audacos eos esse*?), but the article was simply omitted in Sihler (1881) and then Sauppe in his 4th edition (1884). In this instance, however, he was not followed by Towle (1889), whose comments are more in line with Deuschle (1861). It is true that what Socrates does here is not only logically, but grammatically suspect, but not for the reason usually given (e.g. in Deuschle 1861; Towle 1889). The construction of λέγειν to be expected here is not necessarily a clause introduced by ὅτι or ὡς – much less indirect discourse with an infinitive, as if it were φάναι – but a double accusative. λέγειν means primarily "count" and only derivatively "say" (where it has the sense "give an account"). Thus λέγω τοὺς ἀνδρείους θαρραλέους means "I count the brave bold." In the relatively rare cases when εἶναι is added, this is not so much by analogy with φάναι, as for the purpose of stressing the reality of the fact. By posing a new, elliptical question

Socrates here capitalizes on the sophist's second disparaging reference to "the many". His argument, the straightforwardness of whose seemingly hedonistic premise many scholars are inclined to question, is so framed as once again to challenge Protagoras to account for his own thinking relative to the thinking of the many. Several times Socrates asks him to confirm that they hold some view. His argument shortly confronts Protagoras with his own disagreement with the many on the possibility of knowing incontinence. Protagoras replies that this is not the only thing "these people" (οἱ ἄνθρωποι)[43] have wrong, and, when Socrates proposes that they develop an argument to convince them, asks "why [they] should consider the opinion of the mass of mankind, who offer as their account whatever they may happen upon".[44]

Adkins' analysis sees Protagoras as caught between professing to teach virtue to an elite and having to gratify his democratically inclined audience (Adkins 1973, 10–12). While this approach begins to appreciate the rhetorical challenges attending a sophist's public utterances, it falls short of seeing the need for differing levels of address (see *Phdr*. 277b5–c7 and Xen. *Mem*. 1.2.58). One must also remember that Protagoras' audience at the house of Callias can hardly be supposed democratic in its sentiments. Virtually all the Athenians mentioned as present for the dialogue were subsequently implicated in the scandals of 416, the mutilation of the Herms and the profanation of the Mysteries, which would on that later occasion, at least, provoke strong apprehensions of an incipient *oligarchical* coup.[45] It will likely have been in connection with the trials of the conspirators during the Spring of 415 that Protagoras was accused of impiety, occasioning his departure from Athens and subsequent death at sea on the voyage back to Sicily.[46] Protagoras need hardly assuage any democratic sentiments inside Callias' house (see Strauss 1971, 4f.); whether he might need to convince some of those present that he can show them how to gratify the *demos* when this is useful is another matter. This, at any rate, seems to be what Hippocrates was after (see *Crito* 312d5–7 and 316b10f).

Comparison with the context in *Republic* 6 where Socrates proposes bringing the many (οἱ πολλοί) to perceive the desirability of philosophical rule (500d10–502a4) suggests that it is not he, but Protagoras who seems to be contemptuous of the many. One might add, as a kind of gloss on both these cases, the effort Socrates undertakes together with his old friend in the *Crito* to persuade "the laws", which can be read

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with οὐχὶ τοὺς θαρραλέους εἶναι; Socrates allows for other interpretations of it: (a) "What is your account of the brave? Is it not that they are ones who are bold?" Or perhaps, (b) "What is your account of the brave? Is it not that they are ones who are really bold?" This is presumably why Protagoras does not identify a fallacy until Socrates proceeds to draw his conclusion from another possible, if less regular interpretation: (c) "What is your account of the brave? Is it not that they are the bold?" He could reasonably have regarded himself as answering (a) or (b). See Adam and Adam (1893) and Denyer (2008, ad loc) for the basic ambiguity.

[43] On the pejorative connotation of the term so used, see Vock (1928, 78), who compares 352e with 353a.

[44] 353a7f. Cf. Heraclitus frags. 2 and 104 D–K.

[45] See Thucydides 6.61, Andocides *De Myster*. 36; Plutarch, *Alcib*. 18; Nepos, *Alcib*. 3.

[46] See Towle (1889, 1–3; = Sauppe 1884, 5–7).

either (a) as indicating Socrates' respect for the laws or (b) as expressing a respect for his friendship with Crito, who, while insensible of Socrates' deeper reasons for undergoing his sentence, is worried how he himself will be thought of by others should he be thought not to have done what he could financially to help his friend escape death (cf. Strauss 1983, 55f. and 66). Transposed to the different situation in the *Protagoras*, the corresponding alternatives would be (a') supposing Socrates to be respectful of the many, and (b') understanding him as appreciative of the extent to which Protagoras, while intellectually contemptuous of the many, remains beholden to them in a pragmatic sense. In any case, reminded of their agreement about dialectical procedure, Protagoras relents, thenceforth answering questions posed in the political terms in which Socrates has chosen to frame his refutation. But – whatever the historical Protagoras may have been or thought – the conclusion to be drawn for the present purpose is that Plato's character of the same name is at best a reluctant theoretician of democracy, only after he has been placed under Socratic duress espousing teachings that Plato may thereby intend to highlight as politically necessary for someone in Protagoras' public position.

Question (2): Is Virtue One Thing or Many?

In addressing the second question, which concerns the unity of virtue, the Socrates of the *Protagoras* appears to offer four arguments for the equivalence of pairs of virtues, arguments which when gathered together imply the mutual equivalence of all. These arguments are based on differing kinds of shared features, however.

1. Justice is qualitatively like piety, since piety is just and justice pious.
2. Temperance and wisdom share the same opposite, folly.
3. Justice and temperance . . . . (broken off).
4. Courage consists in wisdom about pleasures.

According to Socrates, Protagoras obviated his completion of the third argument out of dissatisfaction with the results of the first two, and later questioned his procedure at an early stage in the fourth.[47] Modern scholars have managed to find fault with one or another of them on logical grounds, but different scholars have diagnosed the supposed fallacies in rather different ways.[48] It will for this reason, among

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[47] See 338c1–d3 and 350c6–351b2, respectively.

[48] On the "surprisingly weak" initial arguments, see Th. Gomperz (1902, 254f., Engl tr. 1905, 313f.) and on the final argument, Gomperz (1902, 258f., Engl. trans. 317–320). For what has come to be called "self-predication" in the first argument, see Vlastos (1954, 337). One may compare Vlastos (1956, xxi–xxxvi) ("How Good is His Logic?"), with Sprague (1962, 27f. n15). Vlastos holds the fallacies he finds in the passage involuntary on Plato's part; Sprague thinks them deliberate. See also Richard Robinson, who draws a distinction between Plato's spokesmen in what he holds to be later dialogues and the primarily provocative Socrates of what he holds to be earlier dialogues: "In the latest dialogues, if the protagonist offers as a serious argument what is in fact a fallacy, then Plato himself failed to see the mistake. For example, if the explanation of the possibility of falsehood in the *Sophist* should seem to us a fallacy, we should be obliged to conclude that

others, be useful to look more closely at Socrates' second argument, that temperance and wisdom are the same, as a sample of their general character.

Fifth century standards governing a dialectical exchange of the kind in which Socrates and Protagoras engage at various places in the dialogue required that the respondent answer questions posed in a series designed to lead him to a conclusion he might not wish to allow. Although logical relations between the premises and conclusion established the necessity that he admit the latter, they typically did not govern the form in which the argument was developed, since this might make its tendency transparent to the respondent at a stage at which he could still take evasive action of some kind. It is for reasons of this kind, among others, that modern philosophers' reduction of dialectical passages like the ones in this dialogue to logical form can be not only rather difficult, but often a decidedly misleading index to the meaning of the passage even only within its immediate context – not to speak of the greater literary economy of a given dramatic dialogue.

The second argument is directed against Protagoras' thesis that temperance is not the same as wisdom. Here is what is required for Socrates' refutation, given a traditional logical form:

If temperance is not the same as wisdom, then folly has two opposites.
But folly does not have two opposites.
So temperance is the same as wisdom.

The two premises have first to be agreed upon, requiring additional premises and sub-inferences from them, but the greater logical inference is secured in this way via by *modus* (*tollendo*) *tollens* [P-> Q; ~Q; so ~P].

Here is how Socrates develops his dialectical refutation:

1. Wisdom is the opposite of folly	(assumed)
2. Temperance is the opposite of folly	(argued for via induction)
3. One thing has only one opposite	(argued for via induction)
4. Temperance is not the same as wisdom	(assumed = Protagoras' thesis)
5. If temperance is not the same as wisdom, folly has two opposites	(from 1 + 2)
6. Folly does not have two opposites	(from 3)
7. Therefore, temperance is the same as wisdom	(from 5 + 6)

The conclusion embodies the contradictory of Protagoras' thesis (4), Q.E.D. For the argument to make sense, one needs to appreciate that Plato uses "opposite" (*enantion*) in the sense of "contrary", rather than "contradictory".

Had Socrates been led exclusively by logical considerations, his argument might rather have taken the following form:

Plato here made a logical error. In the earliest dialogues, on the other hand, there is no general reason for supposing that Plato was himself deceived by any fallacy by which he makes Socrates deceive another;" (1942, 101 [=1969, 21f.]) For an interpretation of three of the arguments as intentionally fallacious, with references to earlier literature, see Klosko (1979).

(i) Temperance is not the same as wisdom	(4)
(ii) One thing has only one opposite	(3)
(iii) Wisdom is the opposite of folly	(1)
(iv) Prudence is the opposite of folly	(2)
(v) If prudence is not the same as wisdom, folly has two opposites	(1 & 2; so 5)
(vi) But folly can have only one opposite	(3, so 6)
(vii) Therefore, temperance is the same as wisdom	(5 & 6; so 7)

It is noteworthy that only the last three steps come at the same places in the argument. Protagoras, confronted with the argument in this more logical sequence, would likely have seen enough of its tendency by then to balk at step (iii) – or at the very latest, at step (iv). The dialectical development of Socrates' argument is evidently determined by the strategy of gaining these two concessions without revealing their logical force.

More specifically, the key to Socrates' success in refuting Protagoras' thesis about wisdom and temperance seems to lie in his elaborate and somewhat distracting argumentation for (2), which in fact flanks his argumentation for (3). Thus (2) is argued for in two separate stages:

(a) At 332a6–c3, Socrates develops the inductive inference that will be needed to establish that temperance is the opposite of folly, but does not yet draw this conclusion. Instead, he next argues, likewise inductively, for (3).

(b) Only then, at 332d3–e5, does he complete the inference yielding (2).

To look at the entire argument in another way in the light of this confusing procedure:

I. At 332a6–c3 Socrates gets all the concessions he needs without giving away the argument.
II. At 332d1–e1, he re-arranges the same concessions in another way.
III. At 333a1–b6, he concludes the inference that temperance is the same as wisdom.

Protagoras readily admits (1), and that (3) is placed in the middle of some elaborate argumentation for (2), and also argued for, suffices to prevent him from questioning (2) when it is presented to him. So by the time Socrates gets to (5), (6) – and (7), the conclusion they necessitate – it is too late for Protagoras to take evasive action. The different ways in which Socrates arrives at (1) and (2), accordingly, explain Protagoras' changed manner of responding during the subsequent argument, where he launches long speeches instead of giving short answers to Socrates' questions.

Although Protagoras does not seem to see the exact flaw, as he apparently will toward the beginning of the subsequent argument about justice and temperance, there is presumably something wrong with the present argument, since the conclusion appears to be wrong. If there is something wrong with the argument, it lies either in the premises or in the procedure. From an ordinary point of view, temperance is primarily practical; wisdom is less so, and seems to include knowledge in a way temperance does not. So perhaps "folly" is used equivocally in (1) and (2).[49] If

[49] So Th. Gomperz (see previous note).

this is the case, Socrates' argument would formally constitute a case of the "fallacy of four terms" (*quaternio terminorum*), by which one uses the same term in two ways while assuming it has the same sense in both cases.[50]

What, then, is the value of such an argument in its context? In a competitive dialectical argument of the kind depicted, it works to confound one's opponent. What of its literary context? Noticeable within the argument is an interesting feature, irrelevant from a purely logical standpoint, introduced via Socrates' early statement to the effect that "what is done both rightly *and beneficially*" is done temperately (332a6f.). The second member of this pair is never developed: from a dialectical perspective, it could be a diversionary tactic of some kind. From a literary point of view, however, it may for this very reason be suspected as revealing something about Plato's conception of the unity of the virtues. Would Protagoras have any basis for objecting to such a statement about any of the single virtues? If not, then a further coincidence of "doing something "piously" – or "justly", "bravely", or "wisely" – with "doing something rightly and beneficially" might begin to reveal something at least generically substantive about the unity of virtue as a whole. One way in which to regard such a feature, like the possibility of an underlying fallacy, is as a case of literary ambiguity – in this instance, perhaps one pointing the reader toward a specific differentia of sorts, by which to see one difference between the ways in which temperance and wisdom are principles of "right and beneficial action" (cf. *Clit*. 409c1–d2 and *Rep*. 1. 336c6–d4). If they are opposite to "folly" in two identifiably distinct senses, then the principle that one thing has only a single opposite can tell us something important about the way these two differ from each other within the larger unity of virtue as a whole. This prospect recalls us to the circumstance that Socrates approaches the larger question from the perspective of four arguments exploring various special relations between pairs of virtues. Having for illustrative purposes considered one of them in some detail, we may turn next to the larger question how various other such points developed in all four arguments might be mutually inter-related.

Plato is reported to have held a doctrine according to which forms are numbers, one aspect of which involved his positing, besides (a) numbers in the ordinary Greek sense, i.e., concrete assemblages of countable things, which are the numbers that we count, and (b) the undifferentiated and purely mathematical numbers by which we count them, also (c) "eidetic numbers". The last were conceived of as non-concrete assemblages of pure units and were aimed at explaining how a given, single number like three could at the same time be three distinct units. This doctrine is known chiefly through Aristotle's criticism of it in the *Metaphysics*. On one reading, Plato, having posited the one and the indeterminate dyad as basic principles, combined these to generate "the most encompassing of the forms: the one as the good; the determinate dyad as being, the soul as the eidetic three, virtue the eidetic four, and so on" (Sachs 1995, 93). That virtue might have numbered among these forms,

[50] See Joseph (1906, 247; 1916, 270).

which seem to have been limited to ten,[51] raises the question whether the structure of eidetic numbers might not provide a model fruitful for understanding the question of the unity of virtue in the *Protagoras*.

That it could in principle serve as such a model for discussion depicted within a Platonic dialogue appears likely from the way the Athenian Guest in the *Laws* poses the same question, which he eventually frames in terms suggestive of the problem eidetic numbers were designed to address. As the long conversation draws to its end in a closer consideration of the guardian-like institution of the "nocturnal council", against a background of various kinds of aim in existing legislative arrangements, Cleinias brings up their earlier statement that matters bearing on the laws should always look to a single thing (πρὸς ἕν), which they had agreed to be rightly called virtue (ἀρετήν . . . ὀρθῶς λέγεσθαι). He recalls further that they had posited virtue as four, with intellect as leader (νοῦν . . . ἡγεμόνα) to which the rest should look (12. 963a1–9). Cleinias here recalls a programmatic point near the beginning of their entire discussion (cf. 1. 630d9–631b2).

The Athenian Guest proceeds to explain the difficulty in discerning both what this thing itself is to which the statesman's intellect looks, and in what versions it occurs (συνιδεῖν αὐτὸ καὶ ἐν οἷς). When they said that the forms of virtue had come to be four (τέτταρα . . . ἀρετῆς εἴδη γεγονέναι), they were committed to saying that each of these was one, given that they were four (ἕν ἕκαστον . . . τεττάρων γε ὄντων). And yet they call them all one thing (καὶ μὴν ἕν γε ἅπαντα ταῦτα προσαγορεύομεν), inasmuch as they say each to be a virtue, on the supposition that they are not actually many, but this one thing alone, virtue (ὡς ὄντως ὄντα οὐ πολλὰ ἀλλ᾽ ἓν τοῦτο μόνον, ἀρετήν) (963a10–d2). The Athenian Guest here poses the problem in arithmetic terms reminiscent of the problem that led to the positing of "eidetic numbers".

According to the Guest, explaining why they get different names – courage, wisdom, etc. – is easier than explaining why they are all called "virtue". In order to clarify this difference, the Guest adopts a dialectical mode, saying that, if his interlocutors ask him why, while calling both one thing, "virtue", they also speak of them as two, "wisdom" and "courage", he will reply that, while the one has to do with fear, which can come about in the absence of reason, no one can become wise without this. The Guest takes a few moments to elaborate why sufficient knowledge of virtue required by the guardians of the laws will include being able to explain also why these and the other virtues are to be called one thing, "virtue" (963d4–964d2).

In order to illustrate how this can come about, the Guest employs a striking comparison, according to which the city they are founding is like the head and senses of men with their wits about them (τῇ τῶν ἐμφρόνων κεφαλῇ τε καὶ αἰσθήσεσιν). The city itself is like the container (τοῦ κύτους),[52] with the younger guardians posted in

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[51] See Arist. *Phys*. 3.6 206b32, *Metaph*. Λ.8 1073a18–22 and M.8 1084a12f. and 29–32; Theon, Smyrn. 99.17–20; *Theol. Arithm*. 58.24f.; Photius *Bibl*. Cod. 187, 142b21–28 Bekk.

[52] τοῦ κύτους at 964e1 has been taken to refer either to the torso (as at *Tim*. 44a6, 69e6, and 78d1) or to the hollow of the skull (as at *Tim*. 45a6f., where it describes the seat of organs for cognition).

the head's heights (οἷον ἐν ἄκρᾳ κορυφῇ), whence they transmit what they perceive to memories (παραδιδόναι . . . τὰς αἰσθήσεις ταῖς μνήμαις), i.e. they report to the older guardians, who are like the intellect (νῷ) in taking counsel together with the younger ones for the sake of the salvation of the city (964d3–965a8).

The relatively exact education of the guardians as they get older must accordingly include an element by which they pass beyond seeing only the many so as to gain a synoptic view of what is one, looking from the many, dissimilar things to the single form. He hereby speaks in terms partly reminiscent of Socrates' description of a "synoptic" phase in the dialectical education of the philosophical rulers of the *Republic*.[53] In this instance, the guardians must be trained to see what that single and same thing called virtue is that pervades all four – courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom – so as to grasp matters bearing on virtue. Thus the Guest and his interlocutors must now press hard to determine what this thing is to which one must look, whether as a unity, or as a whole, or as both, or however it may be naturally constituted (τὰ νῦν οἷόνπερ σφόδρα πιέσαντες μὴ ἀνῶμεν, πρὶν ἂν ἱκανῶς εἴπωμεν τί ποτ' ἔστιν εἰς ὃ βλεπτέον, εἴτε ὡς ἓν εἴτε ὡς ὅλον εἴτε ἀμφότερα εἴτε ὅπως ποτὲ πέφυκεν·) (965b1–966a4).

The *Laws* is generally held to be a late work of Plato, and the words last quoted resemble a formula found in other dialogues likewise hypothesized as "late" productions, in which one may plausibly suppose the doctrine of eidetic numbers to be at play.[54] Could he have developed a doctrine of eidetic numbers much earlier? At least one scholar has entertained the possibility. Joe Sachs taught at St. John's College, where Jacob Klein served as dean for many years. In his earlier work on Greek mathematics, Klein offered an interpretation of this teaching, according to which it can be seen to play a key role in the teaching on the greatest kinds in Plato's *Sophist*. Here is how Klein characterizes these numbers:

> [The] eidetic number, finally, indicates *the mode of being of the* noeton *as such – it defines the* eidos *ontologically as a being which has multiple relations to other* eide *in accordance with their particular nature and which is nevertheless altogether indivisible*. (Klein 1968, 91)[55]

Sachs (2011) seeks to extend the usefulness of the underlying Platonic doctrine as an interpretive aid to several other dialogues concerned with the phenomenon of sophistry, including the *Protagoras*. In reference to a fivefold structure of virtue seemingly presupposed in this dialogue, he suggests a geometrical model: "something like a regular pentagon sharing its vertices with a five-pointed star. From the

Since it is ambiguous without a specifying qualifier (cf. Ast *Lex* 1835–38. s.v.), it could equally well refer to the entire body above the waist, including the head (cf. *Tim*. 67a4f.), which would perhaps best cohere with οἷον ἐν ἄκρᾳ κορυφῇ at e2.

[53] πρὸς . . . τὸ ἓν ἐπείγεσθαι γνῶναί τε, καὶ γνόντα πρὸς ἐκεῖνο συντάξασθαι πάντα συνορῶντα (965b9f.). Cf. *Rep*. 7.531c9–d6 and 537b8–c9.

[54] Casertano (2004, 86–90) approximates to seeing as much.

[55] Die eidetische Anzahl endlich gibt *die Seinsart des νοητόν als solchen an*: *sie is die ontologische Bestimmung des εἶδος als eines in vielfältigen Sachbezügen zu anderen εἴδη stehenden und doch schlechthin unaufteilbaren Seienden* (1934, 88; emphasis Klein's).

virtue at each vertex, lines would run to each of the other four, and each line would represent a relation of mutual dependence" (Sachs 2011, 16). Sachs is almost too quick to acknowledge that this is an "artificial" way to regard such a question, and that, "like any eidetic-number structure, it is only a theoretical guide to, and no substitute for, philosophical thinking" (ibid.). But, even this much granted, we might reasonably expect, in an adequate account of the unity of five virtues a theoretical discussion of some 20 ways in which these single virtues are interrelated. For four virtues, as premised in the *Republic* and *Laws*, the number of such relations would be 12, and the shape of the corresponding figure a square containing two diagonals. In a literary text of this kind, that would suggest, for each argument, four (or perhaps even eight) indicative points of the kind of which we isolated two in the course of examining the second argument.[56] There are probably at least two more that might be found in it, but instead of looking for these, we may examine a related, but more "poetic" way in which such pointers can regularly be seen as operative in Plato's prose dramas, even while, because of their subtlety, they will be generally overlooked not only by members of academic philosophy departments in search of "content" that is "philosophically interesting", but even by classical scholars more accustomed to the interpretation of literary texts.

After Protagoras prevents Socrates from concluding his third argument, at which Socrates prepares as if to leave, a colorful dramatic interlude follows, at the end of which Protagoras reluctantly agrees to continue a dialectical discussion with Socrates. The complex discussion eventually compelling his agreement features six distinct speakers: (in order) Callias, Alcibiades, Critias, Prodicus, Hippias, and Socrates. Callias urges the justice of Protagoras' demand that he be allowed to answer as he pleases,[57] at which Alcibiades reminds them of the rules in an agonistic event of the kind they are witnessing, implying that Protagoras is running from the fray.[58] Critias intervenes to charge these two with partisanship excessive for the occasion, recommending in its place a more moderate attitude of neutrality toward both parties.[59] He addresses his remarks explicitly to Prodicus and Hippias, who in this order follow up with two epideictic speeches developing Callias' recommendation. Prodicus elaborates on the idea of neutrality by drawing some fine distinctions

[56] "... the different virtues are intricately related in a way that needs sorting out if we want to know precisely what would make us good or virtuous" (Frede 1992, xxviii). The dialectical analysis of the second argument set forth above is indebted to a course I attended on the *Protagoras* that Michael Frede taught at Berkeley about 40 years ago.

[57] 336b4–6: Ἀλλ'– ὁρᾷς; – ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, δίκαια δοκεῖ λέγειν Πρωταγόρας ἀξιῶν αὑτῷ τε ἐξεῖναι διαλέγεσθαι ὅπως βούλεται, καὶ σὺ ὅπως ἂν αὖ σὺ βούλῃ.

[58] 336b8–δ1: Οὐ καλῶς λέγεις, ἔφη, ὦ Καλλία · Σωκράτης μὲν γὰρ ὅδε ὁμολογεῖ . . . εἰ μὲν οὖν καὶ Πρωταγόρας ὁμολογεῖ φαυλότερος εἶναι Σωκράτους διαλεχθῆναι, ἐξαρκεῖ Σωκράτει · εἰ δὲ ἀντιποιεῖται, διαλεγέσθω ἐρωτῶν τε καὶ ἀποκρινόμενος, μὴ ἐφ' ἑκάστῃ ἐρωτήσει μακρὸν λόγον ἀποτείνων, ἐκκρούων τοὺς λόγους καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλων διδόναι λόγον κτλ.

[59] 336d7–e4: Ὦ Πρόδικε καὶ Ἱππία, Καλλίας μὲν δοκεῖ μοι μάλα πρὸς Πρωταγόρου εἶναι, Ἀλκιβιάδης δὲ ἀεὶ φιλόνικός ἐστι πρὸς ὃ ἂν ὁρμήσῃ · ἡμᾶς δὲ οὐδὲν δεῖ συμφιλονικεῖν οὔτε Σωκράτει οὔτε Πρωταγόρᾳ, ἀλλὰ κοινῇ ἀμφοτέρων δεῖσθαι μὴ μεταξὺ διαλῦσαι τὴν συνουσίαν.

needed to see the appropriate comportment for speakers and audience alike,[60] after which Hippias develops the question of propriety within a larger political and even natural context.[61] Once these five speakers are done, Socrates, after arguing against Hippias' proposal that they appoint an umpire for the discussion, offers a proposal by way of compromise that Protagoras finds impossible to resist, so bringing about the sophist's reluctant agreement to continue.[62]

Explaining all the elements relevant to a fuller philological demonstration extends beyond the limits of the present study; but we can provisionally hypothesize that one fruitful way in which to understand the literary design of this interlude is as an illustration of the interaction of five virtues:

Callias: Protagoras is just in his demand to answer as he wishes	(justice)
Alcibiades: but he needs to be more forthright, given the agonistic occasion	(bravery)
Critias: Hippias and Prodicus, we should observe a moderate neutrality	(temperance)
Prodicus: we all should be mutually respectful, while also discerning	(wisdom)
Hippias: and maintain a civil bearing, since we are all fellow-citizens by nature	(piety)
Socrates: so let us take turns asking and answering, but without a human arbiter	(virtue)

According to the subsequently authoritative scheme in the *Laws*, the virtues of justice, temperance, and bravery are subsumed by wisdom, while piety stands alone, outside what would become four cardinal virtues.[63] Looking to this model, and on the assumption that a characterization of the virtues and their unity is indeed the framework determining an apparently purely dramatic and thereby extra-"philosophical" interlude, then, on the further hypothesis that virtue exhibits an eidetic number-structure, we can expect the contribution of Prodicus cumulatively to reflect justice, bravery, and temperance as well as wisdom proper, but to leave piety aside.

Commentators on the dialogue traditionally explain Prodicus' display as designed by Plato to parody that sophist's peculiar fascination with fine distinctions in the

[60] 337a2–8: χρὴ γὰρ τοὺς ἐν τοιοῖσδε λόγοις παραγιγνομένους κοινοὺς μὲν εἶναι ἀμφοῖν τοῖν διαλεγομένοιν ἀκροατάς . . . ἐγὼ μὲν καὶ αὐτός, ὦ Πρωταγόρα τε καὶ Σώκρατες, ἀξιῶ ὑμᾶς συγχωρεῖν κτλ.

[61] 337c6–d1: Ὦ ἄνδρες, ἔφη, οἱ παρόντες, ἡγοῦμαι ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς συγγενεῖς τε καὶ οἰκείους καὶ πολίτας ἅπαντας εἶναι φύσει, οὐ νόμῳ.

[62] 338b2–d3: Ταῦτα ἤρεσε τοῖς παροῦσι, καὶ πάντες ἐπῄνεσαν, καὶ ἐμέ τε ὁ Καλλίας οὐκ ἔφη ἀφήσειν καὶ ἑλέσθαι ἐδέοντο ἐπιστάτην. εἶπον οὖν ἐγὼ ὅτι αἰσχρὸν εἴη βραβευτὴν ἑλέσθαι τῶν λόγων. . . . εἰ μὴ βούλεται Πρωταγόρας ἀποκρίνεσθαι, οὗτος μὲν ἐρωτάτω, ἐγὼ δὲ ἀποκρινοῦμαι, καὶ ἅμα πειράσομαι αὐτῷ δεῖξαι ὡς ἐγώ φημι χρῆναι τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον ἀποκρίνεσθαι.

[63] See note 36 *supra*.

meaning of words. While this seems likely to be so, this aspect of the passage need not exhaust it of deeper meaning any more than the satirical character of the dialogue as a whole need vitiate its serious teaching. From the standpoint of this reflection, it is noteworthy that, although most have tended to dismiss Prodicus' lexical observations as overdrawn pedantry, a few have noticed at least some genuine merit in them.[64] We may accordingly consider what significance, if any, they might have relative specifically to the question of the unity of virtue.

Critias offers Prodicus what proves to be a critical prompt when he says that ". . . we [sc. Critias, Prodicus, and Hippias, as opposed to Callias and Alcibiades] ought side neither with Socrates nor with Protagoras, but instead entreat both in common (κοινῇ) not to break off the get-together in the midst of things." Prodicus will in the course of his speech offer four sets of verbal distinctions, and he begins the first by praising Critias' expression, qualifying it to the effect that they should be "common" (κοινούς) but not "equal" (ἴσους) hearers of both parties to the conversation, and then proceeding to explain his dissociation of these usually paired ideas.[65] His explanation turns on the distinction between geometric and arithmetic equality – familiar to readers of Plato from its Socratic expression in the *Gorgias*. His point is that, while they should give ear to both speakers in common, they should give them differing credit in proportion as they exhibit wisdom or ignorance. His recommendation thus strikes a mean between the simple partisanship of Alcibiades or Callias and the moderate neutrality of Critias, and it does this by invoking (a) the principle that a later tradition will call distributive justice (Denyer 2008, ad loc). From his observation how they as hearers should comport themselves Prodicus turns his attention to the speakers, challenging them to agree to engage in disputation (ἀμφισβητεῖν) without descending into quarrelling (ἐρίζειν).[66] He again explains his distinction, now in terms of the difference between mutually well-intentioned friends and enemies at odds with each other. He in thus way requests that, for their part, they (b) temper what could otherwise be outright contentiousness.

Having specified the right comportment for both audience and speakers, Prodicus moves to explain the likely results for both, saying that the get-together could in such a way come to be exceedingly fine (καλλίστη), explaining this by going over the same general ground in two corresponding steps, but in reverse order. For their part, the speakers might in this way achieve (c) a good repute (εὐδοκιμοῖτε) in the eyes of the hearers, as opposed to merely receiving their praise (ἐπαινοῖσθε). The former he locates in the guileless souls of the hearers, observing that the latter can often come in the form of the speech of liars. The hearers, in turn, might most of all thus (d) experience cheer (εὐφραίνεσθαι), as opposed to feeling pleasure (ἥδεσθαι), he adds, explaining the former as possible when learning something and partaking

[64] See Adam and Adam (1893, ad loc) and cf. Gagarin (1969, 150n35).

[65] As noted by Sauppe (1884) and others, κοινός and ἴσος used together of ἀκροατής function effectively as a hendiadys in Attic oratory. Cf. LSJ s.v. ἴσος II.3 and some more instances cited in Denyer (2008, ad loc).

[66] Cf. a distinction discernable in Platonic usage between *antilogic* and *eristic*, discussed in Kerferd (1981, 59–67).

in prudence by way of thought alone (μανθάνοντά τι καὶ φρονήσεως μεταλαμβάνοντα αὐτῇ τῇ διανοίᾳ), and the latter, when consuming something or undergoing something else pleasant with the body alone (ἐσθίοντά τι ἢ ἄλλο ἡδὺ πάσχοντα αὐτῷ τῷ σώματι).

Prodicus' remarks form a chiasmus, including two lexical distinctions arranged relative to the company's hearers and then speakers, respectively, followed by two others relative to the same speakers and then hearers, respectively, all centered on a statement that the get-together might in this way come to be exceedingly beautiful or fine. Even without indulging in a philological examination of the phrasing of these distinctions, one begins to see how these four parts of Prodicus' exhortation might be taken to reflect, respectively, the virtues of justice, temperance, bravery, and wisdom:

(A) We hearers should
  (1) listen to both in common, and
  (2) not award credit equally; (justice)
(B) and the speakers should
  (1) engage in friendly dispute, and
  (2) not quarrel like enemies (temperance)
In this way the get-together might be exceedingly fine; since
(A') the speakers will so achieve
  (1) heartfelt good repute, versus
  (2) pretended praise; (courage)
(B') and we hearers will experience
  (1) psychic cheer, versus
  (2) corporeal pleasure (wisdom)

Noteworthy further is that their sequence reflects the ordering in the *Republic* (wisdom, courage, temperance, justice), rather than the hierarchy of the *Laws* (prudence, justice, temperance, courage). That they point to a unified organization of the main virtues in this way is perhaps less than obvious on the surface of Prodicus's speech. But that they do emerges more clearly once one considers the conventional associations he evokes. As but one example, one may note that the terminology translated "be of good repute" (εὐδοκιμεῖν), while it can certainly have other applications, is Plato's term of choice in two passages in which characters here present are either praised for their fortitude in battle or have praised others for theirs.[67] More obviously, an affinity between Prodicus' last distinction between "feeling pleasure" and "experiencing cheer" and a subject prominent later in the dialogue itself has not gone entirely unnoticed: by having Prodicus differentiate grades of enjoyment by way of a soul-body distinction, Plato prepares for a theme that will determine

[67] Laches praises the conduct of Socrates during the retreat at Delium at *Laches* 181b1–4, and Critias in his poetry praised that of Glaucon and his brothers at a battle before Megara (*Rep*. 2. 368a1–5).

Socrates' final argument that courage even in the face the perils of the battlefield consists in wisdom.[68]

What about piety? To raise this question is to broach the greater interpretative problem of the interrelation between the various different treatments of the unity of virtue in the several dialogues in which Plato comes to grips with the question. In the other cases, the concern is with the unity of four main virtues, not five. One way in which to explain the discrepancy is to suppose that Plato's thought developed in some corresponding way, i.e., that he for some reason changed his mind about piety's being a virtue of the rank of the other four.[69] This supposition has no little appeal to anyone who wishes to understand Plato as developing toward more "advanced" views – here, of the kind characterizing modern secular humanism. But it seems at least doubtful whether this can be so, given the emphasis placed on piety in other ways in the *Laws*.

An alternative way in which to account for such differences is to refer them to the specific economies of the literary dialogues in which the variations are encountered.[70] That piety figures even centrally in the *Euthyphro*, for instance, seems no mystery, quite aside from any hypothesis about Plato's development. But then why would it in the *Protagoras* figure alongside the four main virtues treated both in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*? Let us briefly consider how all five, as well as the question of the unity of virtue, are introduced in the *Protagoras*.

The question of the unity of virtue arises out of expressions Protagoras uses in his mythico-logical speech, which is designed to show that virtue can be taught. Already in the mythical part of this speech, he speaks of the polemical art as being a "part" (μέρος) of the political art, as well of arts' "having been distributed" (νενέμηνται), implying some unified store of arts, but of all men's "sharing" (μετεχόντων) in certain of these arts. Twice Protagoras speaks of "justice and the remaining political virtue (123 a6f. and b2)", where he might just as idiomatically have used the plural "virtues", hereby implying that justice and the other political virtues in some way make up an undifferentiated entirety. After he makes the transition to non-mythical exposition, he speaks even more clearly of virtue as being a

[68] Gagarin (1969, 150n35) similarly associates each of Prodicus' other three verbal distinctions with a different part of the dialogue. One may add that εὐφραίνειν, together with its noun εὐφροσύνη, is relatively rich, older poetic terminology (prominent in Pindar, as e.g. at *Isth*. 6.3 and *Nem*. 4.1, respectively). These terms bear comparison with εὐθυμεῖν and εὐθυμίη in their Democritean usage (thus B3, B189, and B286 and B2c, B4, and B191, respectively). The two nouns are interestingly paired in a statement helping define the physician's art at Hippocr. *Lex* 4: ἡ δὲ ἀπειρίη, κακὸς θησαυρὸς καὶ κακὸν κειμήλιον τοῖσιν ἔχουσιν αὐτέην, καὶ ὄναρ καὶ ὕπαρ, εὐθυμίης τε καὶ εὐφροσύνης ἄμοιρος, δειλίης τε καὶ θρασύτητος τιθήνη. Δειλίη μὲν γὰρ ἀδυναμίην σημαίνει · θρασύτης δὲ, ἀτεχνίην. Δύο γὰρ, ἐπιστήμη τε καὶ δόξα, ὧν τὸ μὲν ἐπίστασθαι ποιέει, τὸ δὲ ἀγνοεῖν. This entire complex of fifth-century terminology for genuine satisfaction is a forerunner to εὐδαιμονία as tied to ἀρετή by Aristotle in *EN* 1.

[69] So Th. Gomperz (1902, 293; Engl. tr. 2, 363f.).

[70] For the likelihood that this variation is consequent on distinct literary occasions, cf. Dover (1980, 126f. with id. 1974, 66f). For other lists including piety, cf. *Protagoras* 329c2–d1 with *Laches* 199d4–e8, *Meno* 78d3–e3, and *Gorgias* 507b1–c7; for a list that by contrast has only the four resembling those in *Republic* 4, see *Phaedo* 69a9–b3.

single thing (ἕν), in which all citizens in a polis have to share, adding that this single thing, the several virtues "when gathered together" (συλληβδήν), is what he calls "a man's virtue" (ἀνδὸς ἀρετήν). Protagoras' own chosen way of speaking thus raises the problem of the relationship between the several virtues, of which he has, by the end of his speech, already invoked three: piety, justice, and temperance (see Strauss 1971, 9.23–10.1). The last two are invoked together first in their Hesiodic form of δίκη and αἰδώς, shortly to be glossed with δικαιοσύνη and σωφροσύνη.[71] At this point they alone seem to constitute political art, or virtue. So what is piety? Is it part of political art or virtue as well? Its first explicit mention comes only in the rational part of the speech, where it numbers along with justice and temperance, which, when taken all together, constitute a man's virtue. This seems to be the mention Socrates refers to when he partly echoes Protagoras' own statement in posing him the question about the unity of virtue (cf. 325a1 with 329c3–6). Why do first Protagoras and then Socrates mention piety alongside justice and temperance in this way?

Piety is important to Protagoras's claim to convey a teachable virtue for at least two reasons. Within his myth, in consequence of Prometheus' theft of fire and gift to men, they alone among the animals recognize the existence of the gods and so undertake to build temples and altars for their worship (332a3–5). The greater importance of this element of his mythical statement has to be seen in the context of an interpretation of the myth as a whole; nonetheless, for what it is worth, here is piety, clearly implied right in his myth, and at a stage previous to any need for the introduction of justice and temperance. Is its presence at this early stage of his account itself an instance of reverence for things higher? It could be nothing beyond a part of the mythical framework of his initial exposition. But there is another consideration. During the rational part, and near the end of his speech, he explains his professional bona fides by way of a policy he adopts toward students who claim dissatisfaction with his pricing: provided these are willing to swear to it before the gods, he will charge them no more than they think his teaching is worth (328b5–c2). In one sense, this clever disclaimer merely confirms the obvious fact that one cannot charge more for teaching on the open market than a student really thinks it is worth. But there is potentially another dimension to it. The historical Protagoras may have professed a scientific agnosticism about the existence and nature of the gods, but as a practical matter, the sophist in Plato's dialogue cannot very well have taught his students immorality in a form that included impiety while at the same time advertising a "satisfaction guaranteed" policy of this particular form (see Strauss 1971, 9.17). Had he done so, it is hard to see how he could have become as rich as he did. At least the virtue of piety was for Protagoras an integral part of good business-policy, which may explain its presence in a list of five main virtues in this dialogue alone.

What then of their unity? Socrates initially poses Protagoras an alternative between supposing that the several virtues are "parts" of virtue conceived as some one thing, and a decidedly strict thesis that the different virtues are distinct in name

[71] See note 38 *supra*.

only. When Protagoras naturally enough opts for the former, he poses an apparently subordinate set of alternatives in terms of two comparisons: one with a whole human countenance (*prosopon*) differentiated into various parts (that also function as sense-organs: mouth, nose, eyes, and ears), versus another with gold whose parts are undifferentiated except in respect of magnitude. Socrates' comparison of virtue to the human face conceived of as a collection of sense-organs to some extent recalls the Athenian Guest's comparison of the city's guardians to the senses lodged in the human head, but it casts the likeness in a different light. Protagoras right away again opts for the former of the two, the human face. This may be because this set of alternatives effectively re-states the previous pair. At the same time, the respective merits and limitations of the two comparisons in the second pair are easier to see and therefore to debate. In order to escape having to discuss the extensive secondary literature on the meaning of "unity"[72] implied in this dialogue, we may instead ask a simpler question: To what extent are these alternatives mutually exclusive? Gold is a naturally uniform substance, invoked in the *Timaeus* to represent the nearest Platonic equivalent to what will become "matter" in the Aristotelian tradition.[73] Its chief characteristic, like that of any "form" hypothesized by natural philosophers – or, for that matter, like each of the "ideas" of Platonism – is that it is all "the same", or entirely "self-similar".[74] Could a human face be spoken of in this way? The author of the Hippocratic tract *Prognostikon* thought so, writing that one could diagnose illness by observing whether a man's face was "similar to itself" (ὅμοιον . . . αὐτῷ ἑωυτῷ). What it is for a face to be so much the opposite of being similar to itself that it portends death, the medical writer proceeds to explain.[75] Exactly what he means

[72] Discussion of the topic in an isolated form took its departure from Vlastos (1972) and Penner (1973), and treatments accordingly at first tended to construe the problem in logical-metaphysical terms of Aristotelian stamp (so e.g. Woodruff 1976; Ferejohn 1982, 1984). In a slight variation, Kahn (1976) sought to place the problem within his peculiar re-construction of Platonic development (on which see Ausland 2008). Later, under the influence of neo-Aristotelian "virtue-ethics", implications for moral theory became a preferred object of focus (so e.g. Devereux 1992; Brickhouse and Smith 1997; Rickless 1998; Cooper 1998; cf. a generalization in Wolf 2007). Hemmenway (1996) put the trend to use in associating the topic with Socrates' supposed intention of exposing a value-free "sophistry".

[73] See *Tim*. 50a4–b5. Cf. *Hipp. Mai*. 289d2–e7 and Arist. *Phys*. 189b13–16.

[74] Cf. Plato *Euthyphro* 5d1–6 and *Parmenides* 128e6–129a2 with Diels-Kranz III, s.v. ὅμοιος (310a35–b22). See also Taylor (1911, 180f. and 214–17) and Burnet (1892, 189f. [4th. ed. 1930, 178f.]).

[75] Progn. 2: "You should observe thus in acute diseases; first the countenance of the patient, if it be like those of persons in health, and especially if it be like its usual self for this is best of all. But the opposite are the worst, (πρῶτον μὲν τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ νοσέοντος, εἰ ὅμοιόν ἐστι τοῖσι τῶν ὑγιαινόντων, μάλιστα δὲ, εἰ αὐτὸ ἑωυτέῳ. Οὕτω γὰρ ἂν εἴη Ἄριστον, τὸ δ' ἐναντιώτατον τοῦ ὁμοίου, δεινότατον.) such as these: a sharp nose, hollow eyes, sunken temples; the ears cold, contracted and their lobes turned outwards; the skin about the fore- head rough, stretched and parched; the color of the face greenish or livid. . . be it known for certain that the end is at hand." (The word "usual" in the underlined phrase is the translator's interpretative addition.) This description gave rise to the modern medical phrase "Hippocratic face" (Latin *facies Hippocratica*), on which see Marinella (2008), who usefully refers to Illich (1995): "In Galenic tradition, physicians were trained to respect Lethe's beckoning and to allow people to step onto Charon's ferry; they learned

by it's being "similar to itself" he does not, but, within the limits imposed by the natural structure of the face, he must have in mind some uniform appearance of overall health. What we might say more specifically for the present purpose, which is oriented somewhat differently, is that, if the lips, nose, eyes, ears, and skin look as they should for this patient, we are viewing the face of healthy man, since these each, as well as all together, present the appearance of an effectively functioning set of sense-organs.[76] Such a way of speaking about the human face, especially against the background of Plato's frequent comparison of philosophy to medicine, suggests that the Platonic answer to the alternative Socrates presents to Protagoras is that the structure of virtue is both like and unlike either of the comparisons, and that reconciling the tension between the two models is itself a model for the philosophical process of coming to appreciate the unity of virtue.[77]

Summary Remarks

In the Protagoras, Plato subjects virtue to examination starting from two main questions: (1) Can it be taught? and (2) Is it one thing or many? In the course of their discussion, however, Protagoras, Socrates, and the others who speak in the dialogue display virtue from a variety of intriguing perspectives. This study makes no claim to completeness,[78] but has sought to follow some of these out along philosophical-literary pathways not usually pursued. A necessarily provisional conclusion would have to be that the meaning assigned virtue in this dialogue remains elusive, but must certainly be more complex in character than is normally allowed in modernizing philosophical interpretations of it. If it cannot be taught, we nevertheless find ourselves learning about it; and if it is not clearly a unity about which we read, we find ourselves prompted to look for an understanding of it that can in due course emerge as such.

to recognise the *facies hippocratica*, the symptoms showing that their patient had moved into the atrium of death. At this threshold nature itself broke the healing contract, and the healer had to acknowledge his limits. At such a moment, withdrawal was the proper service a physician rendered to his patient's good death."

[76] For the way in which five sense-organs might be unified in a single cognitive clearing-house of sorts, one may compare Aristotle's notion of an αἴσθησις that is κοινή (cf. *De An*. 3.1 425a27f. with other passages cited in Bonitz (1870), *Index Aristotelicus* 20b13–24).

[77] Hartman (1984) comes to a similar conclusion on different grounds. For yet another angle, see Centrone (2004).

[78] Thus we have virtually passed over a notorious and lengthy episode in which Socrates interprets some lines from the poetry of Simonides. But see the Appendix *infra*.

Appendix: Socrates on Simonides' Poetry

During the second half of the conversation reported by Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras* Socrates engages in a close examination of the wording of a poem by Simonides that Protagoras alleges is self-contradictory. In interpreting this poem so as to meet the sophist's criticism, Socrates finds meanings within it that numerous modern scholars have condemned as properly Socratic doctrines forcibly and anachronistically read into Simonides' text.[79] Such scholars often appear to have little compunction about translating things Socrates and Protagoras say in Plato's dialogue into terms integral to the philosophy, science, social science, or literary and rhetorical criticism of distinctly modern times.[80] In the above study, we have tried to avoid falling into this practice but also from time to time call attention to cases where it appears that others may have been guilty of it.

A study of the treatment of virtue in the *Protagoras* may plausibly avoid a confrontation with the complex problem of the meaning of at least this poem per se, since it never even once – at least in the parts of it that remain to us – mentions virtue. Of course, the meaning of the poem per se is something different from the meaning of Socrates' use of it within this literary hypothesis, and both these are different from the meaning of Plato's use of Socrates' interpretation of it. Illuminating treatments of all are available.[81] This is not to say that all that might be said has been, but any such contribution to this discussion must await another occasion.

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[79] So, e.g., Frede (1986, 740): "[Socrates] imposes, consciously and forcefully, his own tenets on the peom" or, in an ostensibly more literary mode, Pappas (1989, 248): "Socrates uses a poem in his defense by forcing it to say what its author plainly did not intend." In treatments of this kind it is usually but a short step to the conclusion that Socrates means only to satirize the interpretation of poetry as something philosophically unserious.

[80] Thus Taylor (1976, 148) charges Socrates with ". . . wrenching the poem from its historical context in order to interpret it in the light of his own, quite different, interests", while himself not hesitating to report what is said in Plato's dramatic dialogue in a form congenial to twentieth century Anglo-American logical analysis.

[81] For the first, see Most (1994), who treats the poem as principally about rhetorical praise and blame, and considering what it takes for a man to qualify for either only for the sake of that aim. For the second and third approached in literary rather than doctrinal terms, see McCoy (1999) and cf. Westermann (2002, 233–268).

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By What Is the Soul Nourished? On the Art of the Physician of Souls in Plato's *Protagoras*

Jens Kristian Larsen

> Therapeia de dê panti pantos mia, tas oikeias hekastôi trophas kai kinêseis apodidonai. (*Timaios*, 90c6–7)

At the end of the private conversation Socrates has with Hippocrates before both of them walk over to the house of Callias, Socrates presents a rather curious image: the soul is like a vessel (*angeion*) which is filled with the doctrines one learns (314a3–b4). The image is curious if one believes that knowledge or wisdom, according to Plato's Socrates, is something that cannot be passed on to others like wares or commodities, a view expressed in both the *Symposium* (175d3–7) and the *Republic* (518b8–d1; see Manuwald 2006, 74).[1] In the *Protagoras*, however, Socrates claims that doctrines, or *mathêmata*, that one learns from others, are like food and drink to the soul: they are the very stuff by which souls are nourished (313c8–9). Accordingly, one should take care that one does not end up consuming unsound doctrines that will prove harmful rather than beneficial to the soul. In particular, one should take great care if one intends to buy doctrines from a sophist, for the sophist is presumably, according to Socrates, like a merchant (*emporos*) or a hawker (*kapêlos*) selling food: just as hawkers and merchants praise all their wares equally regardless of their quality, it may be the case that the sophist, who praises all he sells, does not know whether his wares are beneficial or harmful (313d1–e2). In fact, as a rule, one knows which of the doctrines are actually nourishing and which are not if one happens to be a physician of the soul, Socrates claims – but if one is not, one might well be ignorant of this (313e2–3). Since Hippocrates is obviously no such expert, Socrates' suggestion that he is about to put his soul into grave danger (313a1–2) is understandable.

[1] Manuwald suggests that Socrates, in characterizing the sophists as merchants dealing in doctrines or "Wissensgüter", bases his characterization on the sophists' conception of education rather than on his own.

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Less understandable is that Socrates, who seems to deny that he himself possesses the expertise characteristic of a physician of the soul (see 314b4–6), is willing to accompany Hippocrates to the house of Callias. If it is so dangerous to entrust one's soul to a sophist (313a1–c3), and if neither Socrates nor Hippocrates possess the knowledge needed to evaluate the doctrines sold by Protagoras, why does Socrates allow Hippocrates to go? At first sight it appears that Socrates, as Patrick Coby puts it, "can offer no satisfactory reason to justify their visiting Protagoras" (Coby 1987, 31). Coby goes on to suggest that Socrates knows that Hippocrates will go to Protagoras in any case, so that Hippocrates will be better off if Socrates accompanies him there (Coby 1987, 32). But the suggestion, although it has its merits, is not entirely satisfactory. Hippocrates claims that he has come to Socrates because he needs Socrates to introduce him to Protagoras (310e2–5), and he would therefore not have gone to Protagoras had Socrates not been willing to accompany him. Another possible explanation could be that Socrates is being ironic, in so far as he in fact possesses the expertise of the physician of souls, a suggestion advanced by Bernd Manuwald (2006, 75). Being a physician of souls, we may think, he will be able to help Hippocrates decide whether the doctrines advanced by Protagoras are nourishing or not. His critical discussion with Protagoras will thus ensure that Hippocrates does not end up consuming any of Protagoras' doctrines. This suggestion also has its merits, but it faces a problem: Socrates does not speak with Hippocrates after he enters the house of Callias. In fact he almost seems to forget him. Furthermore, that Socrates is helping Hippocrates through his discussion with Protagoras seems to presuppose that Hippocrates is able to see the contradictions in Protagoras' teaching that Socrates points out. But even careful readers of the dialogue are not always sure what these contradictions are. A third explanation could be that Socrates is ironical when claiming that Protagoras and the doctrines he sells are so dangerous. There is some truth to this suggestion, or rather, what Socrates is claiming about the dangers of sophistry is more complex than often assumed. Still, as we shall see, through his discussion with Socrates Protagoras is revealed to be a dangerous acquaintance: Socrates' warning is not unfounded.

We thus seem faced with a problem that this paper undertakes to investigate: Why does Socrates accompany Hippocrates to meet Protagoras? The first possibility to be considered in this connection is that the very fact that Hippocrates wants to associate with Protagoras shows that Hippocrates is himself a potentially dangerous young man, perhaps no less dangerous than Protagoras. It will further be urged that Socrates demonstrates that he is a physician of souls through his conversation with both Hippocrates and Protagoras. By this is not meant that he proves able to cure them (as we shall see he may be said to start treating Hippocrates), but rather that he proves able to assess or reveal their "psychic" fitness, to reveal whether they are healthy or not. A final point will be that what Socrates makes manifest about the condition of the soul of Hippocrates does not correlate with what Socrates reveals about the soul of Protagoras: what Hippocrates desires is not what Protagoras offers for sale. Perhaps it may even be the case that Socrates, by exposing what it is Protagoras sells, is able to show Hippocrates that Protagoras' wares are poisonous

precisely because Hippocrates desires something that Protagoras is not able to give him: the honor that may be the aim of political ambition.

Socrates Probes Hippocrates

Early in the morning, as Socrates explains to an unnamed companion, Hippocrates, a young man acquainted with Socrates, called as he was lying in his bed. He did this with a view to having Socrates introduce him to Protagoras. For Protagoras, according to Hippocrates, is wise, and Hippocrates would like Protagoras to make him wise as well (310d7–8). More precisely, what Hippocrates has heard about Protagoras – for he has never met him himself – is that he is "exceedingly wise at speaking" (*sophôtaton* … *legein*) (310e6). It is in order that he may learn this wisdom that he urges Socrates to accompany him to meet Protagoras.

Hippocrates is young, highly spirited and accustomed to rushing about in search of things he wants (See Coby 1987, 25–27): this is clear from the fact that he more or less storms into Socrates' bedroom in the early hours just before dawn (310a7–b3), from his impulse to go to Socrates immediately once he has heard that Protagoras is in town, even though it is very late in the evening (310c5–d2), and also from the abrupt way he states his bidding to Socrates, which culminates in a heartfelt entreaty – Why don't we walk over to him! – followed by a hortatory appeal – let's go! (310e2–311a2). In an aside to the unnamed companion Socrates also claims a previous familiarity with the manliness (*andreia*) and excitement (*ptoiêsis*) manifest in Hippocrates' fervent desire to visit Protagoras. Finally, when Socrates asks Hippocrates whether Protagoras has wronged (*adikein*) him, a suggestion Hippocrates jokingly accepts, Hippocrates explains that Protagoras wrongs him by alone being wise and by not rendering (*poiein*) Hippocrates wise as well (311d3–6). This suggests both that Hippocrates understands wisdom as something that can be imparted to one person by another, and that he regards it as something to which he has a rightful claim of some kind. It is perhaps not too much to say that Hippocrates is apt to remind us of the man dominated by *thymos* or spiritedness depicted in Book 8 of the *Republic*. All the same, Socrates convinces Hippocrates that they cannot go at once to Callias' house, where Protagoras resides, since it is early. Instead, he suggests, they should pass the time walking around in the courtyard until the sun comes up.

Apparently, Socrates is not entirely frank with Hippocrates. Behind his suggestion that they should wait some time before visiting Protagoras we find another motivation, a motivation Socrates explains to the unnamed companion and thereby also to us, but not to Hippocrates: Socrates wants to examine (*diaskopein*) Hippocrates by testing (*apopeirasthai*) his strength or resolve (*rhômê*) (311b1–2). He does so by questioning him about his intended visit to the great sophist. Later on, Socrates suggests that he is questioning Protagoras in order to see how he stands towards knowledge in a manner parallel to the way someone who, wishing to

examine (*skopein*) the health or another bodily function of another man, might ask that person to uncover his chest or back (352a1–b2).[2]

This motif of inspecting or examining a man with a view to assessing the condition or "fitness" of his soul, which in the passages just mentioned is explicitly connected with Socrates' activity of questioning, seems to be echoed in the very first questions Socrates poses Hippocrates in order to examine him.[3] Socrates wants to know whether Hippocrates has understood to *whom* he is going and *what* he will become, now that he has decided to seek out Protagoras. In order to spell out what he means by posing the question, he asks Hippocrates what he would answer were he asked the same question prior to going, not to Protagoras, but rather to his namesake Hippocrates of Cos, the famous physician (311b5–c1). Socrates then repeats the question, now about two sculptors, Polycleitus and Pheidias (311c5–8). As a rule of thumb, one can assume that Plato's Socrates chooses his examples with care: in addition to illustrating how one should understand the type of question he is asking, the examples given are often meant to illuminate certain aspects of the subject matter Socrates is inquiring into. We are therefore entitled to wonder whether Socrates sees a parallel, real or feigned, between the wisdom possessed by Protagoras and that of the physician, on the one hand, or that of the sculptors, on the other.

Although it would be worthwhile to examine what both examples may imply about Protagoras' wisdom, we shall limit ourselves to looking at one of them, the physician. Is there a connection between sophistry, or the wisdom of Protagoras, and medicine understood broadly as a craft directed at promoting, securing and restoring bodily health? Can a goal of sophistry be described as making the soul more "fit" or restoring "health" to it? As becomes clear at the end of the dialogue Protagoras is familiar enough with Socrates to have spoken about him often to others (cf. 361e1–5) and this may suggest that Socrates is no less familiar with Protagoras and his understanding of sophistry; maybe this familiarity informs Socrates choice of example at the beginning of the dialogue.

That this may be the case is further suggested by the fact that Socrates himself, in the discussion about pleasure and the good later in the dialogue (357e2–4), says that all the sophists present in Callias' house claim to be physicians able to cure ignorance (*amathia*). And Protagoras, when explaining in his display speech that almost everyone can acquire virtue, in the mythical part of the speech claims that anyone unable to partake in a sense of shame (*aidôs*) and justice (*dikê*) should be put to death because he is like a plague (*nosos*) in a city (322d5–6). This claim is repeated in the argumentative part of the speech where Protagoras states that such a man is incurable (*aniatos*; 325a7). Protagoras thereby implicitly likens education in

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[2] See Lampert (2013, 108–9) who suggests that Socrates is "[c]asting himself as a doctor"; this claim is too strong to be supported by the text in itself, however, since it need not be a doctor who inspects someone else's body. It is safer to say that Socrates' depicts his examination of the mind of Protagoras as analogous to the way someone might examine the bodily health or other functions of someone else by inspecting specifically his body.

[3] The metaphors of medical examination as philosophical inquiry and philosophy as medicine are found in many Platonic dialogues. An interesting discussion can be found in Moes (2000, 32–46). Moes does not discuss the *Protagoras* in any detail, though.

virtue – where education should be understood in the widest sense – to medical treatment. We may note that Protagoras likewise compares his own educative efforts to the doctor's treatment in the *Theaetetus* (167a3–6): as the doctor uses medicine to improve the condition of his patients, the sophist uses *logoi*.[4] In both dialogues, it seems, Plato depicts Protagoras in a way suggesting that he understands sophistry as being somehow analogous to the physician's knowledge. Whether Socrates ultimately agrees with this view is another question.

When Socrates likens Protagoras' wisdom to that of a physician he asks what Hippocrates would become if he went to a physician intending to pay him wages on his own behalf (*argurion telein hyper sautou misthon ekeinôi*). Hippocrates claims it would be in order to *become* a physician (311b5–c4). He apparently does not consider the other alternative, that he might go to the physician in order to get a health examination, to receive advice how to live or to be cured from any ailments from which he might be suffering.[5] This is perhaps no surprise given that Hippocrates wishes to go to Protagoras in order to learn something: he assumes that Protagoras possesses a certain wisdom that he will be able to pass on to others for wages. Still, one could go to a physician and pay him wages in order to learn something, for instance how to live a healthy life, without thereby wishing to become a physician oneself.

Hippocrates' understanding of the reason people go to wise people to learn from them immediately leads him into difficulty. If one goes to such people in order to learn their wisdom as something analogous to an art, as Hippocrates' response to Socrates' examples suggests, going to Protagoras would turn one into a practitioner of Protagoras' wisdom, that is, a sophist. But Hippocrates emphatically does not want to become a sophist (312a6–8). He is therefore happy when Socrates suggests a new way of thinking about Protagoras and his wisdom: perhaps Protagoras is like a writing teacher, a music teacher or a gymnastic teacher (312b1–2), that is, someone able to teach subjects that are part of a general education (*epi paideiai*, 312b3–4). This, Hippocrates now claims, is exactly the kind of learning or instruction (*mathêsis*) he believes he will get from Protagoras (312b5–6). We may gather that Hippocrates wishes to be introduced to Protagoras in order to become wise, not in order to become what Protagoras is, but, we may assume, in order to enjoy the power Protagoras' wisdom brings. We should note that this does not preclude Hippocrates' believing that what Protagoras has to offer is something like a craft he can teach, since writing and gymnastics are certainly crafts or arts. It need mean only that he accepts that it is not a craft one acquires in order to become a professional craftsman.[6] As Socrates suggests, Hippocrates wishes to learn only what is becoming for a free man (312b4), he certainly has no plan to become a wage-earner.

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[4] One may compare what Protagoras states here with Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, 8–10. See Roochnik (1996, 71–74) for a discussion of this.

[5] This is pointed out by Mr. Reinken in Strauss (1971, lecture 4, 22).

[6] This is emphasized in Adkins (1973).

We now know that Hippocrates hopes to gain instruction relevant to a general education from Protagoras, and, more precisely, that he hopes to become good at speaking. But Socrates doubts that Hippocrates even knows what a sophist is. If he does not know this, Socrates goes on to warn him, he has in mind to hand over his soul to the service, caretaking, cultivation or medical service – the Greek verb is *therapeuein* – of someone whose professional credentials he does not understand; this means that he does not know whether this "handing over" of the soul is a good thing or not (312c1–4). Again we see Socrates suggesting that Protagoras, should he be willing to teach Hippocrates his wisdom, will treat or take care of the soul of Hippocrates in a manner like the way a physician or trainer might attend to or take care of bodies, even if he also implies that he may be a fraud.

Hippocrates responds by saying that he on his part thinks he knows what a sophist is, namely someone knowledgeable about wise things, since this, according to Hippocrates, is what the name "sophist" implies (312c5–8).[7] But this answer does not satisfy Socrates. Painters and builders also understand "wise things", he explains, and therefore Hippocrates needs to specify the kind of work or activity (*ergasia*) about which the sophist is knowledgeable, just as he would be able to say that the painter understands how to make likenesses (312c9–d5). Hippocrates therefore states that the sophist makes (*poiein*) people clever at speaking (*deinos legein*, 312d6–7).

This brings Hippocrates' reason for going to Protagoras into full view: Hippocrates wishes to go to Protagoras because he thinks that Protagoras' professional activity is to produce competent speakers, which to Hippocrates seems to mean politically competent speakers. For, as Socrates later points out, Hippocrates appears to him to desire to become distinguished or highly regarded (*ellogimos*) in the city (316c1–2),[8] and it is presumably with this aim in view he wishes to learn to become clever at speaking from Protagoras.

Before we go on, we should take a moment to consider how we are to understand the relation between the sophist and his pupils. Hippocrates seems to believe that a sophist teaches his pupils to speak in a way analogous to the way other craftsmen teach their pupils their respective crafts, as can be seen from his responses to Socrates' various analogies. What does this belief imply about the effect of the sophist's teaching? In general we may claim that, in teaching a craft, a craftsman passes on his craft to a pupil, and the result of this teaching will be that the successful pupil will acquire the wisdom or virtue of the teacher and accordingly be able to produce or do the same things as the teacher: thus the painter teaches the pupil how to paint, the sculptor how to make sculptures, the writing teacher how to write. If

[7] Denyer (2008, 75) points out that Hippocrates is mistaken, since the "ιστ of σοφιστής is quite different from the ιστ of επιστήμων". Still, one should note that Socrates does not object to the etymology here, and perhaps also that Theaetetus seems to make a similar inference in the *Sophist* 221c9–d6 insofar as he claims that the name sophist implies that the sophist cannot be a layman, but must be thought of as possessing *technê*.

[8] It is a nice touch on Plato's part that he has Protagoras ending up (361e4–5) stating that he shouldn't be surprised if Socrates should become one of the men distinguished (*ellogimoôn andrôn*) for wisdom.

sophistry is teaching how to speak, and if this instruction corresponds to the way crafts are taught, the primary concern of the sophist would be to make sure that his pupil acquires the wisdom that will enable him to produce good speeches. In all these cases, we may suggest, the mastery or virtue of the craft acquired would be attested to by the products or actions of the pupil. The quality of a painting immediately reveals the level of mastery acquired by an apprentice just as a clever speech immediately bears witness to the wisdom or competence of the pupil of the sophist. In order to evaluate whether the sophist is successful as a teacher, one has merely to consider whether his pupils are able to speak well or cleverly.

However, if we consider Socrates' previous analogy between sophist and physician, we may suggest another way of looking at the sophist's relation to his pupils. This way of seeing the relation is worth spelling out in some detail, no matter how ironical Socrates' suggested analogy may be, for it will have a bearing on the way we should understand Socrates' relation to Hippocrates. If the sophist is like a physician, his primary activity will consist in exercising his art on others, not in teaching it to others. If we follow the analogy further, this exercise would include an assessment of the psychic condition of the pupil, possibly his treatment, and finally advice how the pupil should live and train his soul after the "consultation"; but none of this would correspond to passing on the craft of the sophist to the pupil, just as the physician would not turn his patient into a physician even while he gave him a rudimentary understanding of the principles of bodily health enabling him to live a better life. That this is a more adequate way of understanding the relation between sophist and pupil than the one according to which the sophist is like a writing teacher seems somewhat confirmed by the fact that Socrates warns Hippocrates that he does not understand to whose care he is handing over his soul, and perhaps also by the fact that we are later told that only one of the men in Protagoras' entourage or "chorus", Antimoiros of Mende, follows him in order to learn his craft (315a3–6). Even if this remark is meant to indicate that the rest of the entourage stay with Protagoras for the sake of education (cf. 312b2–4), we seem entitled to infer that Antimoiros is the only one who is out to learn all the tricks of Protagoras' trade.

Let us now return to Socrates' cross-examination of Hippocrates. Given that Hippocrates claims that a sophist makes people clever at speaking, Socrates asks to know what it is that Hippocrates believes the sophist makes people able to speak cleverly *about*. Hippocrates vaguely suggests that this must be things about which the sophist makes his pupils knowledgeable, but when Socrates asks him what this is, he admits that he is no longer able to answer (312e5–8). Hippocrates, who would very much like to become a pupil of Protagoras, does not have anything to say when asked what he presumes Protagoras will teach him, except the ability to speak cleverly.

Hippocrates' problem with specifying what Protagoras teaches mirrors Gorgias' problems in the dialogue named after him. Like Hippocrates, Gorgias has trouble identifying a specific subject matter for the rhetoric that he teaches, and hence, according to Socrates at least, in identifying what type of craft rhetoric is, on the assumption that a craft must have an identifiable field of objects (cf. *Gorg.* 449c9–453a7). But there is a significant difference: Hippocrates is not himself a

practitioner of the ability to speak cleverly or rhetorically. Furthermore Hippocrates has never even met Protagoras and he clearly does not understand what it is that Protagoras himself claims to teach, namely *euboulia* (cf. 318e5). All he knows is that everybody praises the man and says that he is most wise when it comes to speaking (cf. 310e3–6): accordingly he has probably not even considered the question whether clever speaking per se is identical with the virtue that Protagoras calls *euboulia*. It is, then, presumably the general rumor that Protagoras' wisdom is concerned with speaking that Hippocrates interprets to mean that Protagoras will be able to make others clever at speaking; alternatively Plato may mean to suggest that Hippocrates merely repeats what people in general thought the average sophist did. But Protagoras is not the average sophist and we have no right to assume without further ado that Protagoras teaches what Hippocrates believes he teaches.[9] If Protagoras does not see *euboulia* as identical with an ability to speak cleverly,[10] Hippocrates is mistaken about the character of his wisdom. We shall return to this point below.

Socrates now sums up what he has established so far through his examination: Hippocrates intends to hand over his soul to a sophist and pay him a great deal of money, without having discussed with anyone whether this is a good thing to do, even though he obviously does not know what a sophist is (313a1–c3). This summary finally makes Hippocrates listen: he admits that Socrates is stating how things are, and thus acknowledges his *aporia*. He thought he knew what sophistry is, but he now sees that he did not. Since this is a step towards becoming wiser according to what many take to be Socratic standards, a step that removes the false belief that one knows what one does not,[11] which could be regarded as analogous to the doctor's purging of the patient's body before bringing it sustenance (cf. *Soph*. 230c4–7), Socrates may be said to have started tending to Hippocrates.[12]

But Socrates' bringing Hippocrates into *aporia* is perhaps only the first step in his tending to Hippocrates. For the fact that Hippocrates desires to go to Protagoras at all might imply that Hippocrates is potentially dangerous, not simply because he believes to know what he does not, what sophistry is, but also because he desires political power, apparently with little understanding of political matters. It seems to be Hippocrates' desire to learn to speak well or cleverly in order to become

[9] That it is Hippocrates, and not Protagoras, who claims that Protagoras teaches the art of speaking cleverly, is correctly emphasized by Stokes (1986, 186–191). Stokes identifies the ability to speak cleverly with rhetoric but it should be noted that the word "rhetoric" is itself never used in the *Protagoras*.

[10] In the *Gorgias* (463a8–465c), Socrates distinguishes sophistry from rhetoric, claiming that rhetoric and sophistry are both types of flattery, but that rhetoric is an imitation of corrective justice (punishment), the psychic equivalent of medicine, whereas sophistry is an imitation of lawgiving, the psychic equivalent of gymnastics. Hence rhetoric is like pastry cooking, whereas sophistry is like cosmetics. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates, impersonating "Protagoras", in a similar manner draws a distinction between the sophist and rhetorician and suggests that sophistry is like private education (167c2–d2) comparable to the expertise of the physician (167a5–6).

[11] See Manuwald (2006, 73).

[12] See Friedländer (1964, 3).

distinguished in the city that induces him to seek out Protagoras (cf. 316c1). But as he proves unable to specify in regard to what in particular he hopes to be able to speak cleverly, and since he does not think that Protagoras will teach him anything other than this ability, it seems that the wisdom he hopes to learn from Protagoras is but a means to an end: to come to be regarded as significant in a political sense. Indeed, the fact that Hippocrates thinks Protagoras will make him knowledgeable only about speaking suggests that Hippocrates does not imagine that he needs to acquire knowledge about political matters in order to become renowned in the *polis*. It seems that Hippocrates thinks that no specialized expertise regarding political matters exists, which is in accordance with what Socrates, at least, claims is the Athenian sentiment, according to which it is not teachable and hence not something possessed by experts in contrast to laymen (319a8–d7).

Socrates now goes on to suggest to Hippocrates that a sophist is "a kind of merchant or hawker of wares by which the soul is nourished" (313c5–6). Although this may seem a strange claim in the mouth of Socrates, we now see that it may be a response to Hippocrates' understanding of sophistry. Perhaps it is also meant as a provocation the purpose of which is to make the young man think. In any case, Hippocrates' response to this suggestion is the last of his comments Plato has Socrates report to his companion. Hippocrates' response is to ask, "But by what is the soul nourished, Socrates?" (313c5–8). Even if Socrates goes on to give Hippocrates a quick answer to this question – a soul is nourished by the things that one can learn (*mathêmata*) – Hippocrates' question should be heard as resonating through the rest of the dialogue. For this, presumably, is what young Hippocrates *really* needs to learn. Indeed, if the soul is nourished by what can be learned, Hippocrates needs to know what the learnable things that are healthy are and whether Protagoras possesses them. Hitherto, Hippocrates has not cared about either question. That Protagoras may in fact impart nothing by which a soul may be nourished, and that one needs a specialized competence in order to judge whether he does, is what Socrates points out to Hippocrates in his final warning before the two of them set out to meet Protagoras.

Socrates explains to Hippocrates that they should beware lest the sophist deceive them by praising his wares, just as merchants dealing in food for the body are wont to do. The latter, Socrates claims, do not know whether what they sell is useful or harmful to the body, but praise all of it, and those who buy their wares are likewise ignorant of this, unless they happen to be physicians or gymnastic trainers (313d1–4). In a similar manner, he goes on to suggest, the sophists praise all their wares, but some of them may be "ignorant whether the things they sell are useful or harmful for the soul" whereas those who buy the sophists' wares have no understanding of it either, "unless one should happen to be a physician of the soul" (313d6–e3). So, if Hippocrates is such a physician, he may safely buy wares from Protagoras or anyone else, but if he is not, he should watch out lest he damage his soul.

Two things should be noted here. First, the analogy between the expertise set over the quality of food for the body and the one set over food for the soul may suggest that there are two aspects of the expertise of the physician of souls, since both the physician and the gymnastic trainer are said to be able to evaluate food for the

body, corresponding to only one competence when it comes to looking at food for the soul. This could suggest that the physician of souls will have knowledge analogous to that of a physician as well as to that of a physical trainer; these were closely related according to the ancient understanding of medicine. If Socrates intends to point to any difference between physician and gymnastic trainer it might be that the physician is more concerned with assessing whether the food is good or bad for the body when ill or recovering, while the gymnastic trainer considers whether the food will nourish a healthy body and make it stronger. We may in fact suggest that Socrates, in inspecting the soul of Hippocrates and assessing what type of question will help reveal its state of ignorance, has demonstrated his mastery of the "diagnostic" competence of the physician of souls. When he later starts to assess the quality of the goods Protagoras offers for sail, in order to make Hippocrates aware of the potential risk involved in buying these, he seems to exhibit the other aspect, which addresses the question what nourishes the soul and keeps it healthy.

Second, Socrates is not claiming that all sophists are ignorant of the quality of what they are selling. In contrast to the sellers of food for the body, who according to Socrates are all ignorant about their wares, Socrates only suggests that *some* of the sophists may be ignorant about what they teach. Even if this is probably an ironic understatement, it must be emphasized that Socrates is not issuing a general warning about sophistry as such but is specifically warning Hippocrates that he ought to make sure that he is able to evaluate the quality of what the sophists are selling since they may be ignorant about its quality. Connected herewith we should note that the main point of Socrates' warning is not to restrain Hippocrates from going to Protagoras. It is rather to make Hippocrates see the importance of the craft practiced by the hypothetical physician of the soul. If one had this craft one could easily discern which learnable things, which doctrines, are useful and which are harmful, and this would remove the danger that might be connected with talking to any sophist. The point is not so much that Hippocrates is in grave danger *if* he goes to a sophist but safe if he does not, the point is rather that he is in danger *because* he wishes to go to a sophist without knowing what is beneficial for the soul and what is not. Had he no wish to go to Protagoras, there would be no danger, and if he learns the craft of the physicians of souls, the potential dangers in his associating with a sophist disappear in any case.

These things should be kept in mind as we read the final section of Socrates' warning, which runs from 314a1 to 314c2. Here Socrates states that the danger of harming the soul when one buys doctrines from the sophist is far greater than the danger of harming the body when one buys food for the body. For bodily foodstuffs can be brought home in containers and examined with regard to their quality before one consumes them. But "psychic sustenance", what you learn (*to mathêma*), you cannot carry away in another container; it is necessary that, once you have paid and have taken what is learnable into your soul and learned it, you walk away either benefited or harmed (314b1–2).

Let us end the discussion of the section featuring Socrates talking with Hippocrates by considering what Socrates is claiming here. It is easy to assume that he is issuing a general warning against dangerous doctrines. If you listen to a

sophist, you may be corrupted straight away, since doctrines affect your soul directly. In this case, Socrates could be regarded as arguing for strict censorship: young people should not be allowed to listen to sophists, since they corrupt people. But if this is what he is saying, we face the paradox pointed out at the beginning of the paper: why does Socrates let Hippocrates visit Protagoras? We should note, however, that what Socrates claims is that you necessarily walk away either harmed or benefited (*anagkê apienai ê beblammenon ê ôphelmenon*)

1. when you have paid (*katatheis*),
2. when you have accepted (*labôn*) and
3. when you have learned (*mathôn*) what is sold (314b1–2).

But whether the pupil takes and learns the lessons a teacher gives is something that does not solely depend on the teacher; it depends as much on the pupil, as any teacher will know. Others need only think of old Strepsiades in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. A pupil uninterested in, or incapable of learning, or one who is skeptical of what you are saying, will never simply absorb what you say as the truth. The ground in which the seeds of learning are to be sown must be fertile and well-prepared in order for the seeds to grow, as Socrates suggests elsewhere (*Phaedrus* 276b1–277a4). Hippocrates was surely fertile soil for Protagoras when he came to Socrates that morning, since he was already convinced that Protagoras was the wisest of all, all eager to learn how to speak cleverly. But we may assume that Socrates, through his cross-examination of Hippocrates, has made Hippocrates less likely to absorb what Protagoras says uncritically. With these considerations in mind, let us now look at what Protagoras in fact claims to be able to teach.

The Mathêma of Protagoras

Having entered the house of Callias, Socrates asks Protagoras, on behalf of Hippocrates and in front of both Hippias and Prodicus, what will be the outcome, or result, for Hippocrates if he associates with, or studies with Protagoras (318a1–4). Prior to asking this question Socrates has explained to Protagoras that he thinks Hippocrates intends to become distinguished in the city (316c1). So Protagoras knows why Hippocrates has come to him. In answer to the question what Hippocrates will gain by associating with him, Protagoras initially states that Hippocrates will become better each day. This echoes what he has said a little earlier, where he has suggested that he, like other sophists, persuades the young that "they'll be the best they can be through their association with him" (316c8–d2), and also that he, in contrast to other sophists, openly confesses to be an educator of human beings (317b2–3). The question is what Protagoras means by education and by becoming as good as possible. In other words, at what does he make people better, in what does he educate them? This is exactly what Socrates, at 318b1–d4, bids Protagoras clarify.

If Protagoras simply claimed to make people clever at speaking, as Hippocrates seemed to assume, we might expect that he would have difficulties in pinpointing his specific area of expertise – after all, this proved a problem for Hippocrates. But this is not what happens. When asked what he teaches, Protagoras answers professionally and to the point: Hippocrates will not learn what he is forced to learn by the other sophists, but only what he comes to learn (218d7–e4). Probably as a response to Hippocrates' reported wish to become distinguished in the city, Protagoras explains that what he teaches is good counsel or being well-advised, i.e. *euboulia*, concerning one's household, namely how it will be best managed, *and* concerning the affairs of the city, how one becomes most able to act and speak regarding these affairs (318e4–319a2). *Euboulia* is the *mathêma* that Protagoras offers for sale. When Socrates asks whether Protagoras means the political craft and whether he promises to render men good citizens (319a3–4),[13] he affirms that this is so.

We note that, even while there may be a link between the ability to speak well or cleverly and being powerful concerning the affairs of the city, it is implausible that the ability to speak well should exhaust the meaning of *euboulia*.[14] One hardly becomes able to *act* politically merely through the ability to speak, nor does one manage a household by such an ability alone. In fact, Protagoras never explicitly claims that this is the case, or that he teaches others the ability to speak cleverly. There is thus some irony in the fact that Protagoras seems to offer Hippocrates something else than what Hippocrates wants to learn, while claiming that Hippocrates will only learn what he has come to learn. In order to become distinguished in the city Hippocrates needs, according to Protagoras, to be well-advised in private and in public, rather than to be able speak cleverly, as Hippocrates apparently thought sufficient. From a purely formal perspective, Socrates can hardly have any objections. Indeed, what Protagoras claims to teach has a certain resemblance to the wisdom Socrates claims the political leaders of the ideal city described in the *Republic* must have, a wisdom that is also identified with *euboulia* (*Rep*. 428b4–d9, 500b8–d9, and 504e3–505b3).[15]

As soon becomes clear, however, Protagoras' assertion that he teaches *euboulia* raises important questions, the first and most obvious being whether one can in fact teach it to others. That this is possible is what Socrates immediately goes on to question, and Protagoras' answer to this question, and the resulting discussion of the relation between the virtues, take up the remainder of the dialogue. There is,

[13] The phrasing "*poein andras agathous politas*" is ambiguous: Denyer (2008, 96) follows some commentators in saying that the words "*andras agathous politas*" form a single expression and that the phrasing accordingly does *not* mean "to make men good citizens", but rather to produce good citizens (men), since this seems to be what the phrase means in e.g. Aristophanes' *Knights* 1304. Syntactically, however, nothing speaks against reading the phrasing as containing a double accusative, as other commentators have construed it, in which case it could mean either "to make men good citizens" or "to make good men citizens". I owe this observation to Hayden Ausland.

[14] That Aristotle suggests that some sophists thought that political expertise is identical with rhetoric (*EN* 1181a14–15) does not guarantee that Protagoras was of this opinion.

[15] See Friedländer (1964, 5 and 7). Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests that *euboulia* was a "politisches Losungswort der damals neuen Paideia" (Gadamer 1991, 147).

however, another question, perhaps less explicit, but more crucial: what does Protagoras understand by being well-advised? Protagoras' view becomes clear only gradually, as Socrates forces Protagoras to reveal his thoughts on this question. When Socrates raises the question how Protagoras understands the virtues in relation to each other, it is also in order to reveal Protagoras' understanding of the political art he claims to teach.

Here we will limit ourselves to looking at a number of passages where Protagoras' *mathêma*, his teaching, is touched upon, if not directly revealed, more specifically at a number of passages prior to what we may call the crisis in the dialogue that erupts at 334c8 and threatens to end the conversation between Socrates and Protagoras. This way of proceeding is necessitated by the fact that Protagoras never explicitly states what *euboulia* or the political craft is. Protagoras and Socrates seem to discuss whether teaching what Protagoras claims to teach is possible without ever really clarifying what it is Protagoras teaches. It is, moreover, conspicuous that, while the discussion with Hippocrates emphasizes the soul and the importance of understanding that by which souls are nourished, Socrates' long discussion with Protagoras never addresses the question what soul is, or, for that matter, what virtue and psychic nourishment are.[16] This may suggest that Protagoras is not particularly interested in these questions, although we should note he does claim that courage arises from nature and good nurture for souls (351b2–3), which may suggest that he sees himself as offering for sale the nurture needed in order that a good natured soul should become truly courageous: perhaps he simply does not get a chance to expound his own views on these matters because Socrates refutes him every time he tries to say something.

That the answer to the question in what Protagoras' own teaching consists is left frustratingly vague is particularly clear from the speech Protagoras gives in order to demonstrate that political craft, presumably identical with *euboulia*, is something that can be taught. As has been noticed by many commentators, Protagoras' speech is filled with riddles or apparent inconsistencies with what Protagoras as a sophist actually does.

The speech emphasizes that everyone needs to participate in political virtue since the *polis* could not come into being if people had no share in reverence and justice; therefore, the mythical part of the speech asserts, Zeus distributes political virtue or knowledge to everyone, in contrast to the specialized crafts given to men by Prometheus (322c5–d6). This assertion seems to correspond to the claim in the argumentative section of the speech that everyone, from the wet nurse to the law-giver, teaches virtue to everyone else (325c5–326e4). We note that this latter claim to a certain degree corresponds to what Anytus and Meletus, two defenders of democracy, say about the ability to make people better in the *Meno* (92e3–6) and *Socrates' defense speech* (24d11–25a11), respectively, namely that all true gentlemen are able to make others better. But even if Protagoras' claims about the teachability of virtue may thus make him more palatable to democratic minded

[16] See Morgan (2000, 151); see also Benardete (2000, 196) who suggests that the "*Gorgias* examines the soul-structure of the *Republic* apart from the city, and the *Protagoras* examines the city-structure of the *Republic* apart from the soul."

Athenians, as has been suggested by A. W. H. Adkins,[17] it leaves Protagoras with some serious problems. If Zeus distributes political knowledge to everyone, no teaching is needed, and hence Protagoras is out of business. If this is only a myth meant to point out that everybody has a *potential* for becoming virtuous, if Protagoras' serious claim is that everybody teaches virtue to everyone else, culminating in the good lawgivers who lay down the laws of the city as paradigms in accordance with which everyone is forced to live (see 326c6–d7), Anytos' and Meletus' objections to sophistry in general would still hold: it is the gentlemen in the city, or the laws established by the good old lawgivers, not professional teachers, that make the young better. Finally, Protagoras' speech only discusses three virtues, namely justice, sound-mindedness and piety.[18] Even if it should be true that everyone needs to participate in these virtues to some extent for the *polis* to exist, none of them seems to be identical with what Protagoras claims to teach, *euboulia*, or with what young ambitious men are interested in learning.[19] Put differently, the three virtues may indeed be political virtues, but they can hardly be the same as the political craft of being well-advised Protagoras advertises as his *mathêma*.

In his lecture-course on the *Protagoras*, Leo Strauss suggests that it is the fact that Protagoras leaves out the political virtue he himself claims to be able to teach from his speech on the teachability of political virtue that is ultimately the reason Socrates wishes to enquire into the unity of virtue.[20] Is the expertise of the politically powerful man (*anêr*), the knowledge Protagoras presumably claims to be able to teach, really identical with the political virtues in which Protagoras claims that not only men, but women and children must share (325a5–6)? On the surface the discussion about the unity of virtue that follows upon Protagoras' speech is motivated simply by the fact that Protagoras himself speaks of justice, sound-mindedness and piety as a unity in his speech (see in particular 324d6–325a2). But from the beginning of this discussion, where Protagoras suggests that the virtues enumerated in his speech are a unity only in the sense that they are parts of virtue (329d3–4), it becomes clear that Protagoras has failed to mention the two virtues he regards as the most important, courage and wisdom, in his speech. It also becomes clear that he thinks that one can have courage without justice and justice without wisdom (329e6–330a3). If one is allowed to regard justice as a stand-in for the three virtues

[17] Adkins (1973, 9–10). Leo Strauss likewise suggests that Protagoras seems to deliberately conceal what he is teaching as a result of his caution (Strauss 1971, lecture 9, 7–15 and compare with lecture 6, 22–23). Friedländer (1964, 13) observes that Protagoras' apparent inability to distinguish himself from other teachers of virtue results from the fact that "jeder absolute, jeder geistige Maßtab dem Protagoras fehlt."

[18] The speech begins by mentioning only *aidôs* and *dikê* as the gifts of Zeus at 322c3, they are then replaced with *dikaiosunê* and *sôphrosunê* at 323a1–2 and at 325a1 the political virtues are listed as *dikaiosunê*, *sôphrosunê* and *to hosion*.

[19] Coby (1987, 46) states that "Protagoras' own sophistry is compatible with freedom because he teaches his students the subjects they naturally desire. And because his students are at the beginning of their adult careers, what they desire is instruction in the craft of success – how to succeed politically and economically". See also Weiss (2006, 33).

[20] Strauss (1971, lecture 9, 23–24). See also Weiss (2006, 38).

that are mentioned in the speech, Protagoras seems to say that courage may be at odds with the virtues required for the existence of the *polis*, whereas the possession of the latter, i.e. justice, does not necessarily mean that one is wise. Perhaps this is also why he later (351b2–3) insists that courage requires a good nature *as well as* nurture, as mentioned above. The sophist will help give the nourishment real men need in order to become truly courageous, a kind of courage that stands in potential conflict with the political virtue possessed by ordinary citizens.

That Protagoras in fact believes that wisdom, in the sense of being well-advised, is in potential conflict with the virtues required for the city to exist, is suggested from the discussion of the relation between wisdom and sound-mindedness that begins at 332a2 and carries over into the discussion of the relation between sound-mindedness and justice beginning at 333b7. The steps of this discussion are, in short, as follows: Socrates gets Protagoras to agree that the opposite of *aphrosunê*, lack of good sense, is *sophia*, wisdom, and further gets him to accept that *sôphrosunê*, sound-mindedness, is the opposite of *aphrosunê* as well. Socrates then goes on to suggest that one thing can have one opposite only, to which Protagoras agrees (332c6–d3). This leads to the conclusion that wisdom and sound-mindedness are identical (333b5–6).

Socrates next asks whether Protagoras believes that one who is sound of mind can do unjust things (333b7–c1). Protagoras claims that he would be ashamed to agree with this – which of course by no means implies that he does not in fact agree – but he admits that many people say so (333c2–3). When Socrates then asks Protagoras whether he would prefer that Socrates conduct his conversation with these people or with him, Protagoras opts for the first and suggests that Socrates should discuss this account given by "most people" (*hoi polloi*, 333c5–6); Protagoras thus cleverly moves from asserting that he would be ashamed to admit what many people say to the claim that the view that one can act unjustly while being of sound mind is in fact the account of the matter most people give. We should note that he does not necessarily imply that most people admit this *openly*; his previous speech in fact suggests that Protagoras is well aware that most people would not (cf.323a5–c1).[21] This maneuver leads to a short imaginary dialogue with these many, where Protagoras is induced to answer on their behalf. The steps of this little dialogue are as follows. It is accepted as a premise that people can be sound-minded while acting unjustly (333d4–6). But does not Protagoras say that being sound-minded is the same as using good sense (*eu phronein*), Socrates asks. Protagoras agrees that it is. He also agrees that using good sense, when it comes to doing unjust acts, is the same as being well advised (333d7–10). He finally accepts that one is sound-minded or well-advised when committing unjust acts if one fares well while doing so, rather than if one does not (333d11–12).

Although these concessions are made by Protagoras while speaking on behalf of those who are unashamed to admit that one can be of sound mind while acting unjustly, we note that Socrates, within this dialogue, subsequently addresses Protagoras in the second person singular (cf. 333d3, d4, d5, d8): this suggests that

[21] Denyer's observation (2008, 132–133), that "in spite of what Protagoras says here, it is hard to find many, or even any, who said outright that one can be temperate in committing an injustice. Popular opinion held the opposite …" may thus be beside the point.

he is not fooled by Protagoras' strategy. We also note that Socrates, although he previously was very reluctant to let Protagoras state anything but what he himself actually thought (331c5–d2), now appears much less insistent: it doesn't matter to Socrates whether it seems to Protagoras that one can act unjustly while being sound minded, since it is the *logos* that Socrates wants to test (333c7–9). He adds, however, that it may perhaps happen that both the questioner and the answerer will be tested or examined (*sumbainei … exetazesthai*) as well. And this in fact seems to be what happens: Socrates in practice assumes that the *logos* Protagoras is ashamed of admitting and therefore ascribes to "many others" is in fact Protagoras' own *logos*, and the discussion of the *logos* is thereby also an examination of Protagoras.

So let us assume that Socrates has seen through Protagoras' attempt at keeping up appearances. What, then, is the upshot of Socrates' inquiry into the relation between wisdom and being of sound mind? Since Socrates has already established, if on rather shaky foundations, that piety and justice are the same or at least almost the same (333b5–6), it is easy enough to assume that he is now attempting to show that sound-mindedness and wisdom are also identical, in order to argue that *all* the virtues are identical. As Roslyn Weiss points out, the first step would be to show that doing injustice "issues in bad things, that is, in things that are harmful to human beings", which contradicts the claim that being well advised or wise "issues in good things"; but this step is never taken since the argument, according to Weiss, is "cut short by a Protagorean tirade" (beginning at 333e1).[22] This interpretation seems reasonable in light of Socrates' strategy for the rest of the dialogue. But here we are not concerned with the rest of the dialogue as designed by Plato, but only with what Protagoras has admitted so far within its dialectical drama. And the fact is that until now, Protagoras has admitted the following: wisdom is identical with sound-mindedness, and sound-mindedness is identical with using good sense, which again is identical with being well advised, the *mathêma* that Protagoras explicitly claims to teach. Furthermore, since Protagoras admits that one can be of sound mind while committing injustice, being well advised is potentially in conflict with justice. As justice is apparently identical with piety, being well-advised must also be in potential conflict with piety. At this point in the dialogue, rather than having a unity of virtue, we then seem to have two sets of virtue, piety and justice, on the one hand, the main virtues treated of in Protagoras' speech, and wisdom and sound-mindedness, which now appear identical with being well-advised, on the other.

This seems to suggest that Protagoras draws a distinction between political virtues (cf. 323a6–7) that depend upon self-constraint meant for the common run of people, virtues that are necessary for the survival of the *polis*, and higher or more manly virtues connected with the intellect, which help a real man or at least a clever one maneuver deftly, and perhaps unjustly, within the *polis* in order to secure his own gain. In this connection we may note that, while sound-mindedness (*sôphrosunê*) was mentioned in Protagoras' speech as one of the necessary political virtues alongside piety and justice, it had a rather peculiar status: whereas everyone, according to the speech (323a5–c1), believes that it is sound-minded to tell the truth in the

[22] Weiss (2006, 40–41).

case where one lacks an ordinary craft, when it comes to justice people believe such a conduct would be madness (*mania*). As madness is commonly regarded as the opposite of sound-mindedness, Protagoras seems to suggest that when it comes to justice, one is sound-minded if one manages to keep up the appearance of justice, even when one is not just. Rather than treating *sôphrosunê* as an ability to control one's desires, as one might expect Protagoras would do when emphasizing the importance of virtue for the existence of the *polis*, Protagoras gives this virtue a decidedly "intellectual" interpretation that points away from self-control to the more "manly" virtues of being clever, wise and well-advised.

The full implications of Protagoras' identification of sound-mindedness and wisdom with being well advised only become clear in the sequel to this discussion, in particular from the discussion of the measuring art. We cannot look into that here. Instead, we will end by looking briefly at what Protagoras has to say about the good in the passage 333d13–334c6, since this seems to be the aim for the *mathêma* of *euboulia*. Protagoras has admitted that one does well while committing injustice if one is well advised, and this leads Socrates to ask whether Protagoras believes that some things are good (333d13). Protagoras answers affirmatively. When Socrates then asks him whether he agrees that good things are the things that are beneficial (*ôphelima*) to humans, Protagoras swears that he also calls some things good even if they are not useful to humans (333e1–2). He explains this curious remark by elaborating at some length how "multi-colored (*poikilon*) and manifold (*pantopadon*) a thing the good is" (334b6): what is beneficial to plants is not beneficial to animals, what is beneficial to the outside of the body is not beneficial to the inside and so on. To put it briefly: the good, which is identical with the beneficial, is relative to different kinds of living beings, according to Protagoras, since what is good for one is bad for another. We may wonder whether he also believes that what is beneficial to one *polis* is not beneficial to another, that what is beneficial to the *polis* may not be beneficial to man and, finally, that what is beneficial to one man is perhaps not beneficial to another. If this is indeed his view, Protagoras' *mathêma*, *euboulia*, which is directed at the good, seems to be grounded in another *mathêma*, another doctrine, namely a doctrine about the good and the beneficial.

Let us then conclude with some thoughts about Socrates, Hippocrates and Protagoras. We have seen that Hippocrates first and foremost wished to associate with Protagoras in order to become clever at speaking. If he believes that this is all it takes to become renowned in the *polis*, it is to some degree in keeping with Athenian practice as depicted by Socrates. There is no specific expertise regarding political matters, everyone is in principle as competent as any other. Protagoras, on the other hand, seems to suggest that this is not true – there is a specifically political craft, namely *euboulia*, which makes one a more capable citizen than others who lack this craft. At the surface, this may look rather Socratic: at least according to a standard view, Socrates criticizes democratically ruled societies because they do not acknowledge that real understanding of political matters is needed in order rule society. In the *Republic*, Socrates calls this understanding wisdom and claims it is directed at the good. He also states that this wisdom makes the *polis* as a whole well advised (428b4–d9, 504e3–505b3). But this is also where Protagoras and Socrates

might seem to part ways. Protagoras claims that the good is what is useful, and the useful is relative to us, whereas the Socrates we find in the *Republic*, at least, suggests that the good is something in itself, independent of what we think about it. This doctrine is never mentioned by Socrates in the *Protagoras*, but Socrates' ostensible purpose in the dialogue is not to bring his own view on such matters into the open, but rather to bring Protagoras' views to light for the benefit of Hippocrates. Whereas Socrates began by tending Hippocrates like a physician of souls by first assessing the quality of his soul and then demonstrating to him that he did not know what sophistry is, we may suggest that Socrates in his long discussion with Protagoras in fact evaluates the quality of the wares Protagoras offers for sale by bringing them into the open.

And what Socrates seems to have brought to light is that what Protagoras offers under the fine-sounding name of being well-advised is simply an ability to calculate how things will be best for oneself, without specific concern for the ways in which they may be better for others. Should Hippocrates assimilate this *mathêma* it would turn him in the direction of tyranny on a small scale, at least in so far as he will become more capable of using the *polis* simply with a view to his own advantage. If so, there is indeed good reason to be afraid of what Protagoras offers for sale, in regard to the souls of the young men seeking to become distinguished by associating with him. We should note that the problem is not that he claims to be able to teach a political art, the knowledge of being well advised that makes men good citizens. If he really was able to teach this, it would a most noble thing (319a7); the problem is rather that his teaching is noble in name only, whereas the reality seems to be that it consists in nothing but the ability to calculate how one should have the greatest advantage, quite possibly at the expense of others. It is thus hardly a surprise that Protagoras is sympathetic to Socrates' later suggestion that the salvation of our lives (*tis sôteria … tou biou*; 356d3) is an art of measurement that will help us calculate what is pleasant and what is not, in order that we may fare well (*eu prattein*; 356d1) by acquiring more pleasures and fewer pains (see 355e5–356e4). It is quite doubtful that such a teaching will help any soul thrive, at least not if we accept what Socrates suggests in the *Republic*, that justice is the heath of the soul (*Rep*. 444c1–e3). Protagoras' *mathêma* is indeed dangerous and Socrates' initial warning was therefore not unfounded.

Whether Hippocrates too realizes the danger of Protagoras after he has overheard Socrates' discussion with Protagoras is another question. Can Socrates with certainty be said to have removed Hippocrates' infatuation with Protagoras through his discussion? One could argue that Socrates, by beating Protagoras in the give and take of dialectical question and answer, has at least demonstrated to Hippocrates that if he wishes to become clever at speaking, he should rather stay with Socrates, like Alcibiades. One could further argue that Socrates, through his ability to bring the consequences of Protagoras' teachings into the open, against Protagoras' will – and perhaps even without Protagoras' knowing what it is that is brought into the open – demonstrates that the *mathêma* that Protagoras offers for sale will not prove palatable to Hippocrates in the end. As the discussion of the art of measurement seems to suggest, Socrates ends up forcing Protagoras to admit that *euboulia* is nothing but prudential forethought that will allow one to avoid risk and calculate

how best to achieve pleasure. This admission may prove to Hippocrates that he will not get what he wants from Protagoras. Hippocrates wishes to become distinguished in the *polis*, presumably in the manner that Pericles is, namely as a great political speaker. If we can trust Aristotle, what drives people with political ambition is only at first sight their desire for honor and, and upon closer inspection their desire to be honored for virtue (*EN* 1095b22–30). But on the reading offered here there is nothing noble in what Protagoras teaches and hence no honor to be gained through practicing it. This much may indeed have become clear to Hippocrates, even if the finer points of Socrates' arguments may have for the time being escaped him. And if Hippocrates is indeed as spirited as Socrates' initial description suggests, we have good reason to suppose that he will make sure to chase Socrates down later to ask him to explain what exactly these arguments were.

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Is Pleasure Any Good? Weakness of Will and the Art of Measurement in Plato's *Protagoras*

Vivil Valvik Haraldsen

Towards the end of the *Protagoras*, Socrates sets out a position according to which pleasure is good, and pain bad, and all human motivation ultimately reducible to pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. This position is then used as the basis for an argument to the effect that what the many, *hoi polloi*, call being weaker than pleasure, or overcome by pleasure, is impossible.[1] It is often claimed that Socrates is denying the possibility of *akrasia*; this Greek term means literally lack of control, rule, or strength, and the term is standardly translated as weakness of will.[2] For the sake of convenience this expression will be used for the time being, with the reservation that it is not meant to imply that Socrates operates with any notion of the will similar to common modern senses of the term. Against the view just mentioned, this article will contend that Socrates is in fact not denying the possibility of weakness of will in this part of the *Protagoras*, but is instead constructing an argument of which the treatment of weakness of will forms but a part. It will be maintained that this argument is ad hominem in the sense that it is aimed at showing the impotence of the philosophical position of Protagoras, the teacher who purports to be able to aid others to become powerful, as well as to be in power himself as a successful representative of his lucrative, although risky, profession.

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[1] The Greek phrasing is *hêdonê* ("pleasure") governed by the verbal expressions *hessasthai* and *hessô einai*, which can both be rendered more literally as "being weaker than", or "inferior to", but more idiomatically with "overcome by".

[2] Another standard translation is "incontinence", cf. e.g. Irwin (1995, 82).

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The article will primarily be concerned with the passage towards the end of the dialogue where the hedonistic thesis is discussed, from 351b3–358d4, although certain points from the subsequent discussion of courage and from the ending of the dialogue will also be considered. In the article's first part some influential lines of interpretation of our main passage will be sketched briefly, and some issues concerning assumptions about Socratic views and the development of Plato's thought relevant to these lines of interpretation will be discussed. In the second part we will turn to our main passage, and look at some of the details of how the argument proceeds; we will, however, be less concerned with the details of the different arguments found in the passage than with the connection between them. A possible connection between the way the argument in this part of the dialogue is presented and the way the doctrine of Protagoras is interpreted in the *Theaetetus* will also be suggested.

In the third and final part of the article a parallel to the *Phaedrus* will be considered. According to the interpretation presented here, an important point of the argument in the last part of the *Protagoras* is to highlight the ambivalence of cleverness in reasoning, underscoring that clever reasoning may still represent an impoverished activity of reason and does not guarantee that one is able to discover the truth about the good. The distinction between clever reasoning and clever speeches and the ability to find truth is a theme found in several dialogues, the *Phaedrus* being a particularly interesting case in connection with the *Protagoras*, since this theme is here closely connected to the question how to distinguish philosophy from sophistry and rhetoric, a question arguably also central to the *Protagoras*. Further, in the light of Socrates' point in the *Phaedrus* about the importance of adjusting one's speech in accordance with the soul of the listener (*Phaedr*. 271a4–272b1), it will be considered whether the argument in the last part of the *Protagoras* is ad hominem in a second sense, tailored to have an effect on Socrates' companion, Hippocrates.

Socratic Hedonism? Perspectives in the Secondary Literature

In a section of our key passage, at 352d7–e1, Socrates states that weakness of will, or not acting in accordance with what one thinks best, is described by the many as being overcome by pleasure and pain (352d7–e1). However, if one substitutes 'good' and 'bad' for 'pleasant' and 'painful', as Socrates suggests one must because the many are not able to point to a good that is not reducible to pleasure, this description becomes absurd. For now it amounts to saying that this is a case where one does not choose what one thinks is best, i.e. most pleasant, and rather chooses what one thinks is bad, i.e. painful (or at least less pleasant), because one is overcome by pleasure. The problem in such situations, Socrates holds, must really be an ignorance of the pleasant and the painful. Therefore, being overcome by pleasure is not possible, and the expression is a defective description of the phenomenon in question.

The denial of the possibility of weakness of will is, according to an influential tradition of interpretation of Plato's dialogues, one of the paradoxes characteristi-

cally advanced by Socrates, and in passages surrounding the one where this argument occurs we also find other such paradoxes: the unity of virtue and the description of virtue as knowledge. On the basis of the identification of pleasure and the good and the ensuing argument against the possibility of weakness of will, Socrates also describes an art that, he suggests, appears to be the salvation of our life. This is an art of measurement (*hê metrêtikê technê*, 356d4) that will make us able to measure pleasure and pain correctly, and thereby direct us to the right course of action.

How the identification of pleasure and the good, traditionally called the hedonism of the *Protagoras*, and this art of measurement should be understood has, unsurprisingly, been the subject of much debate in the secondary literature, and this will also be the guiding question for this article. Several scholars have found reason to doubt that the hedonism represents the view of Socrates.[3] On the one hand, that it should do so has been thought unlikely because it is regarded as a morally "base" position[4] – and indeed, the hedonism Socrates sets out certainly seems to be of a very basic form, leaving no room for qualitative distinctions between pleasures at all (cf. 356a5–b1). On the other, it has been thought unlikely that hedonism represents the view of Socrates because it seems to fit badly with what Plato has Socrates say in other dialogues, the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* being obvious examples (*Grg*. 495d2–e1, *Rep*. 505c6–11). Some scholars therefore either doubt or outright reject that hedonism is the view of Socrates, offering different explanations why Plato lets Socrates present his argument on its behalf.[5] In contrast, a second approach has been to take hedonism to be Socrates' own premise, but to contend that it does not actually amount to hedonism as this is ordinarily understood.[6] A third line of interpretation is to read the thesis of *Protagoras* as an ordinary hedonism that is nonetheless Socrates' own, and also to see the measuring-art he describes on its basis as a sincere part of Socrates' ethical teaching in the dialogue. Terence Irwin (1977, 103 and 1995, 92–94) and Martha Nussbaum ([1986] 2001, 109–111) represent this third line of interpretation, although their interpretations differ in various other respects.[7]

[3] 'Socrates' will here refer to the character in Plato's dialogues; the question how to differentiate between the views of Plato and the views of the historical Socrates will not concern us here.

[4] Cf. Guthrie (1956, 22) and the discussion of objections to "the antihedonist" interpretation in Zeyl (1980, 261).

[5] Different versions of this line are found in e.g. Sullivan (1961, 22), Kahn (1996, 247), Zeyl (1980, 257), and Ferrari (1990, 137). The interpretation presented here has many points of agreement with that of Ferrari, but takes a somewhat different view of the role of the argument against the possibility of weakness of will.

[6] E.g. Vlastos (1956, xl–xli) and Guthrie (1956, 22–23). Woolf (2002, 248n44) also seems to fall under this line of interpretation, and even endorses the position he takes Socrates to be advancing: "I do not think it can be denied that the version of hedonism presented here *is* a reasonably plausible account of human motivation, given the range of goods it purports to explain…"

[7] Nussbaum, however, takes Socrates (and Plato) to have greater enthusiasm for the prospect of a measuring-art than for hedonism: "Pleasure enters the argument as an attractive candidate for this role [a unit of measure]: Socrates adopts it for the science it promises, rather than for its own intrinsic plausibility" (2001, 110). Among the commentators who regard the hedonism as Socrates' own view are also Hackforth (1928) and Dodds (1959, 21n3).

Although the first two lines of interpretation mentioned, which either do not regard hedonism as Socrates' own view, or regard it as an unusual hedonism, certainly leave many questions to be answered, the third line of interpretation is perhaps for many the one in most immediate need of defence, in view of what seems its blatant discrepancy with what is commonly regarded as the Socratic outlook. We can quote R. Hackforth's short article, "Hedonism in Plato's *Protagoras*": "The puzzle of the dialogue is that Socrates is made to propound a Hedonistic ethical theory, which appears to be not merely contradictory of the views attributed to him in any other dialogue, but inconsistent with the whole attitude and spirit of the man as we know him from Plato's general portrait." (1928, 40)[8]

So what are the reasons for regarding the hedonism of the *Protagoras* as Socrates' own thesis? One seems to be the role it plays in its context. For as we will see, *on the basis of this thesis* Socrates argues that weakness of will is impossible.[9] On the same basis Socrates also secures Protagoras' agreement to the description of courage as knowledge and wisdom, in this way suggesting that virtue is knowledge.[10] These views are standardly recognized as "Socratic views". Gregory Vlastos maintains, in his introduction to the *Protagoras* of 1956, that Socrates does not usually argue from premises that are not his own for views that clearly are his own.[11] If Vlastos' contention is correct, his point can still be seen to support different lines of interpretation. One is to regard the hedonism, that is, the premise from which Socrates argues, as Socrates' own. A second is to assume that something highly uncharacteristic is going on in Socrates' argument at the end of the *Protagoras*, namely that Socrates is in fact arguing from beliefs not his own to a conclusion that is his own. A third is to doubt that the views he is arguing for on this premise are in fact his own.[12]

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[8] Hackforth nevertheless argues against interpretations that do not take the hedonism to be meant seriously, which he describes as the prevailing view in his day, referring to amongst others Taylor and Cornford (41). Hackforth regards the hedonistic thesis as "Plato's first attempt" (42) to answer the question what the standard of goodness in Socrates' view could be, adding that "He soon advanced beyond this view" (42). Cf. also Gregory Vlastos' introduction to the *Protagoras*: "[…] hedonism is not in keeping with the general temper or method of Socratic ethics" (1956, xl–xli), and Guthrie (1956, 9).

[9] This fact is emphasized by many commentators, and in conjunction with the fact that it is Socrates who talks the many into accepting the hedonistic thesis, it is, as Ferrari (1990, 133n29) notes, often taken to be a point in favour of regarding the hedonism as Socrates' view (e.g. Hackforth [1928]; Vlastos [1956, xxxix–xl], Irwin [1977, 106 and 1995, 94], Nussbaum [2001, 110–111], Woolf [2002, 226]); the present interpretation will agree with Ferrari that although this suggests that the hedonism is not the view of the many, it does not make it necessary to assume that it is the view of Socrates.

[10] Significantly, Socrates does not state that virtue is knowledge or that knowledge is virtue in the *Protagoras*, a point noted by Ferrari (1990, 127).

[11] Vlastos (1956, xln50). The view Vlastos identifies as clearly Socrates' own is what he calls his "great proposition": 'Knowledge is virtue'.

[12] The examples cited here of different ways of reading the hedonism and the passage in which it is found obviously do not make up an exhaustive list. Examples of some recent readings are Woolf (2002) and Russell (2000), who both, although in different ways, discuss Socrates' argument in the

The first option is, as already mentioned, adopted by both Irwin and Nussbaum. A version of the second has been suggested by Donald Zeyl (1980, 257);[13] he contends that Socrates uses hedonistic premises dialectically in order to argue that even on such premises, virtue is knowledge.[14] Roslyn Weiss, in her book *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies* (2006), to which the present article is indebted, opts for the third; her view is that Socrates uses hedonistic premises to argue that *only* on such premises is virtue knowledge.[15] She also argues that we should doubt that the denial of the possibility of weakness of will and the proposal of the art of measurement that is argued for on the basis of the hedonistic thesis form part of the view of Socrates.[16] The plausibility of the two last points will also be argued for in the following. It will further be argued that the argument against the possibility of being overcome by pleasure based on the hedonistic thesis forms part of a reductio ad absurdum aimed at exposing the position of Protagoras as deeply problematic, by displaying the inconsistencies embedded in the relation between his doctrine of measurement and his claim to be able to act as an educator.[17] But answering the question how we should understand the suggestion that virtue is knowledge is a complex undertaking. It will be suggested that the *Protagoras* tells us something about a kind of knowledge that is involved in virtue, in particular by telling us in some way what it is not, by way of showing that it is *not* something one may learn from Protagoras. At the same time, the dialogue tells us something about the functioning of human reason, showing that the ability to discover what the good is is not primarily a question of cleverness in reasoning.

Before we turn to the key passage in the *Protagoras*, a few more comments about other lines of interpretation are in order. The first concerns the denial of the possibility of weakness of will, or, as it is standardly referred to in the secondary literature, the denial of *akrasia*. This has often been regarded as something that is most certainly a Socratic view, and one important reason why many scholars are inclined to regard it as such is the fact that Aristotle ascribes it to Socrates, criticizing him for

passage as an example of *elenchos*, and Callard (2014), who offers a thorough discussion of the argument against the possibility of being overcome by pleasure. Callard argues that Socrates' argument "does not constitute a rejection of the possibility of *akrasia*" (31), a point with which the present interpretation agrees, but offers a different view of the function of the argument than the one presented here.

[13] The interpretation of Sullivan (1961) is along similar lines.

[14] Kahn's interpretation is similar in the view of the hedonistic thesis; he regards "both hedonism and the denial of *akrasia* as dialectical devices designed to provide a persuasive defence of the Socratic paradox that no one is voluntarily bad" (1996, 247).

[15] Weiss (2006, 48n32).

[16] Weiss (2006, 47–63).

[17] It is not suggested that there is a formal *reductio*, but rather that it leaves Protagoras in a position that is laughable (cf. *katagelân*, 361a3–5). The interpretation presented here shares several points of agreement with the explanation of hedonism in the light of the overall concern of the dialogue presented in Weiss (1990). For discussion of the question how to understand the characterizations of different statements or views in this part of the dialogue as laughable or ridiculous (*geloion*, 355a6, 355b4, 355d1; *gelâv*, 355c8; *katagelân*, 357d2–3), see e.g. Dyson (1976, 36).

it, in Book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VII. ii. 1145b24–25). But it might be that the basis for Aristotle's ascription is the *Protagoras* itself. He refers to Socrates as one of those who thought *akrasia* impossible on the grounds that it would be strange if, when knowledge was in a man, something else could master it and "drag it about like a slave", evidently enough an allusion to something Socrates says at *Prot*. 352c1–2. So the testimony of Aristotle might be as good as Aristotle was as a reader of the *Protagoras*, and whether he was a good reader of Platonic dialogues – especially when it comes to attention to detail – is a matter for debate.

Further, when considering whether the denial of *akrasia* is a Socratic view, it is worth keeping in mind that this view is in fact not argued for anywhere else than in the *Protagoras*. And we should rather call it the denial that it is possible to be overcome or conquered by pleasure and pain, which is, as mentioned above, the phrasing found in the text (352d8–e1). Socrates tells Protagoras that this expression is used in the explanation most people give to the situation they see as one in which people who recognize (*gignoskein*) what is best are unwilling to act on it (*ouk ethelein prattein* 352d6–7). The use of the term *akrasia* in the characterization of the argument seems to come from Aristotle, since *akrasia* is neither found in the passage nor anywhere else in the dialogue.[18] Both in the *Gorgias* and in the *Republic*, on the other hand, we find Socrates using another form, *akrateia* (*Gorg*. 525a6, *Rep*. 461b1), but here Socrates is represented as assuming that it is possible.

Another relevant point is the issue of chronology and the development of Plato's thought. Several of the scholars who regard the hedonistic thesis as representing Socrates' – or Plato's –view, have a particular idea of the chronology of the dialogues and the development of Plato's thought in mind. Irwin, for example, regards the *Protagoras* as presenting the views of the historical Socrates as well as of Plato at the time Plato was writing it. Irwin regards the account of the tripartite soul of the *Republic* as the expression of a development in Plato's thought that provides the solution to a problem, i.e., the denial of *akrasia*, which Plato had come to regard as psychologically implausible. And so Irwin may identify a plausible progress in Plato's thought (1995, 87 & 209–11). Nussbaum likewise has a developmental perspective, although it seems that in her view real progress is not made until Aristotle (2001, 9–10).[19]

[18] Cf. Denyer (2008, 183).

[19] The widespread line of interpretation which identifies the denial of *akrasia* as a Socratic doctrine of the supposedly early dialogues and regards the account of the tripartite soul in the *Republic* as fashioned to account for *akrasia*, thereby marking a break with "Socratic psychology", should at least regard it as a challenge that Socrates in the *Crito*, a dialogue few scholars engaged in considerations of chronology would regard as of the same period as the *Republic*, seems to recognize the possibility of acting against one's best judgement. Socrates here states the following: "for I am not only now but always a man who follows nothing but the reasoning which on consideration seems to me best" (*Cr*. 46b4–6). The quotation in itself suggests that it would be *possible* for him not always to be such a man, and the context of 46b-c clearly suggests that not everyone is like that, and that Socrates could also, were he a different kind of man, fail to act in accordance with his argument, in fear of the power of the many "as children are frightened with goblins" (46c4–6). The terms are not the same as those used by the many in the *Protagoras*, but it looks like Socrates is saying that he will not let something else, e.g. fear, conquer his recognition of what seems best.

In this article no specific view of chronology or development is assumed, and so no attempt to read the *Protagoras* as some particular stage on the path from one point to another will be made. It will be considered legitimate to draw parallels to any Platonic dialogue, wherever it seems relevant to do so, and irrespective of its placement in the traditional chronology. Moreover, we will, as mentioned above, be less concerned with the details of the different arguments in the passage – the details of the argument against the possibility of being weaker than pleasure, for example, have been minutely discussed, often in isolation from the hedonism on which it follows – but rather with the role the arguments in the passage might be taken to play in the context of the dialogue as a whole.

Pleasure as the Good: Conversations with the Many

Let us now turn to the passage where the hedonistic thesis is introduced. The theme of pleasure is brought in by Socrates right after Protagoras has effectively resisted Socrates' attempt to get him to agree that courage is wisdom (at 349a6–351b2), stating that courage comes from nature along with good nurture of souls (*apo phuseôs kai eutrophias tôn psuchôn*, 351b2). Socrates now changes the subject, and asks whether Protagoras would say that some human beings live well and others badly. When Protagoras has agreed, Socrates proceeds to ask whether it seems to him that a human being lives well if he lives in pain and suffering. Protagoras unsurprisingly answers that it does not. The next question put to Protagoras is whether it seems to him that someone who gets to the end of his life and has lived pleasantly has lived well. Protagoras allows that it does. Socrates now suggests that the conclusion that follows is that it is good to live pleasantly and bad to live unpleasantly. Here Protagoras agrees only with a reservation: "So long as it's beautiful things (*ta kala*) that he lives his life taking pleasure in" (351c1–2).[20] So Protagoras at this point seems to want to make a distinction between what is beautiful or noble, *kalon*, and what is pleasant – only some things one may take pleasure in are *kala*. To this Socrates exclaims: "What, Protagoras? You don't mean that you too, like the general run of people (*hoi polloi* 351c3), call some pleasant things bad and some painful things good?" (351c2–3).

At this first stage, then, Socrates shows that Protagoras and the many have ground in common in the form of an intuition that goes against a simple hedonism that claims that the pleasant life is good. Socrates' likening of Protagoras to the many, *hoi polloi*, does not seem to be to Protagoras' liking. He objects to Socrates' putting the question in so simplistic a manner, but he stays with his answer, adding that it seems safer (*asphalesteron* 351d3) for him, "in connection not only with the present answer but also with the rest of my life" to give an answer that upholds the

[20] All translations from the *Protagoras* are, unless otherwise stated, from Sachs (2011), sometimes slightly modified.

distinctions Socrates seemingly challenges.[21] He states that there are among pleasant things some that are bad, while among the painful things in turn there are some that are not bad, and a third sort that are neither bad nor good. We can note Protagoras' concern for *safety*, a point to which we will return later.

Socrates continues: doesn't Protagoras call *pleasant* such things that have some pleasure in them or produce pleasure, and are they then not good to the extent that they are pleasant? (351d–e). At this point Protagoras breaks off and declines to give an answer stating his opinion. He says: "It's just as you keep saying all the time, Socrates, let's examine it, and if the point under examination seems to be agreeable to reason, and the pleasant and the good appear to be the same thing, then we'll get together on that" (351e). Here we should notice that what Socrates has suggested in his question, is that pleasant things are good – leaving open the possibility that the pleasant things may be two types of thing, both those that have pleasure in them and those that produce (*poiein*) pleasure. Furthermore, this suggestion does not amount to suggesting that the good and pleasure are the same thing, i.e. that pleasant things exhaust the good things; these pleasant things could be one among several types of things that are good. It is Protagoras that brings in the suggestion that the pleasant and the good may appear to be the same thing. We can here note further that Protagoras suggests that they may *appear* (*phainesthai* 351e5) to be the same. Words denoting how things seem and appear abound in the passage, a point to which we will also return.

Socrates' next move seems at first a bit surprising: likening himself to someone who wants to examine a human being by his looks, he says he wants something of the same in their mutual examination, but in regard to Protagoras' thought, *dianoia*. Socrates says: "Now that I behold the condition you're in on the matter of the good and the pleasant, that it's the way you say, I feel the need to say something like: Come then Protagoras, and uncover this part of your thinking for me as well" (352a6–b2). So even if Protagoras just declined to give his own opinion, Socrates proceeds as if Protagoras has made clear his view on the good and pleasure – and in the light of the immediate context one may wonder whether that means that Socrates is content with his first statement, preserving the distinction between pleasure and the good and the beautiful, or takes Protagoras to accept the simple hedonistic thesis.

If the latter is implied, one could wonder why Protagoras does not at once object and clarify his position on the matter. Perhaps he is distracted by Socrates' next question; for the part of Protagoras' thinking that he now wants to see uncovered does not concern pleasure or the good, but knowledge. And while Socrates earlier practically mocked Protagoras for agreeing with the many, he here serves up an opportunity for him to disagree with them. This is how he presents the alternatives:

> The way it seems to the many (*dokei tois pollois*, 352b3) about knowledge (*epistêmê*), is something along the lines that it is not a strong or guiding or ruling thing, and since they

[21] Weiss (2006, 48) emphasizes that Socrates presents hedonism as a common ground for Protagoras and the many, and reads Protagoras' comment about safety as an admission that the reservation that some pleasures are bad and some painful things good is "just his way of playing it safe" (49).

> don't think of it as being of that sort, when knowledge is present in a human being, as it often is, they think it's not knowledge that rules him but something else, sometimes spiritedness (*thymos*), sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, occasionally lust (*erôs*), frequently fear, literally thinking of knowledge as they would of a slave that could be dragged around by everyone else. So is something like that the way it seems (*dokei*, 352c2–3) about it to you too, or does knowledge seem to you to be a beautiful thing of such a kind as to rule a human being, […] and [does it seem to you] that intelligence (*phronêsis*) is strong enough (*hikanos*) to provide support for (*boêthein*) a human being?" (352b–c)

In short, Socrates asks whether Protagoras thinks knowledge is something weak and lowly, or something fine and strong. Protagoras opts for the latter, unsurprisingly in the light of the fact that he is a teacher, a teacher of *euboulia*, the ability to make good decisions concerning one's own affairs and the affairs of the city (cf. 318e4–319a2). He adds that it would be shameful for him, if anyone, not to claim wisdom and knowledge the most powerful of all things in human affairs.

At this point we may ask why Protagoras seems so happy to disagree with the many, and why he seemed dismayed to be likened to them earlier; for in his so-called Great Speech earlier in the dialogue he seemed to express a democratic sentiment, saying the Athenians were reasonable in listening to everyone in matters pertaining to the polis and virtue (323a5–c4). We are, however, given grounds for doubting Protagoras' sincerity in this matter, as both earlier in the dialogue and particularly in this section he makes statements disparaging the many. At 317a he distinguishes between the people in cities who have power to act and the many, *hoi polloi*, who are described as hardly noticing anything, they "just sing whatever tune those others pass on to them" (317a4–6). The Greek term that is translated as 'to notice' is *aisthanesthai*, so Protagoras interestingly contends that the many do not even *perceive* things for themselves. The others, those who have power, are not so easily deceived and supposedly do perceive things for themselves (cf. 317a2–4). Here Protagoras clearly draws a distinction between people capable of getting a correct or at least a more accurate impression of things, and people not so capable, placing the many in the latter group. The *Theaetetus* offers an interesting perspective on this point. There, Protagoras' position is brought into the discussion in connection with Theaetetus' first suggestion that knowledge is perception, *aisthesis*, when Socrates suggests that this is what Protagoras meant by his maxim that man is the measure (151e8–152a4).[22] Protagoras' remark about the many in the *Protagoras* may in this light seem to suggest that in his view the many – in contrast to others like himself who are somehow on a higher level – cannot obtain knowledge, inasmuch as they are unperceiving. The view that the many are incapable of knowledge

[22] *Pace* Nussbaum, who regards a relativist or subjectivist reading of Protagoras' position in the *Protagoras* as the result of, among other things, "an unjustified assimilation of this dialogue to the 'Protagorean' doctrine of the *Theaetetus*" (2001, 448). In the absence of obvious reasons to the contrary, evidence in the form of Socrates' interpretation of Protagoras' position in a Platonic dialogue seems a good source of added elucidation of the way Socrates regards Protagoras' position in another dialogue. Why, in Nussbaum's view, it is unjustified to use *Theaetetus* in this way seems traceable to her assumption of a particular development between dialogues, an assumption that could certainly be questioned. Vlastos, on the contrary, sees the subjectivist position clearly implied in the *Protagoras* (1956, xii–xx).

is a position often attributed to Socrates, or Plato, who are often regarded as in this respect opposed to sophists like Protagoras.[23]

We see Protagoras' disparaging attitude towards the many again in the passage that follows directly on his assent to the view of knowledge as powerful. When Socrates states that the many are not persuaded by Protagoras and himself and believe that many people who recognize what is best are unwilling to act on it because they are overcome by pleasure or pain, Protagoras answers, "I assume people (*hoi anthropoi*) say a lot of other things too that aren't right" (352e3–4). Socrates now asks him to take part in an attempt to persuade them (again *hoi anthrôpoi*) and teach them what the experience really is that they claim is to be overcome by pleasure. But Protagoras first balks: "What, Socrates, do we really have to examine the opinion of most people? Whatever happens to strike them, that's what they say" (353a7–8). But when Socrates suggests that the examination may help them find out what *courage* is, Protagoras agrees to continue. We should also keep in mind that it seems that it is particularly the praise of knowledge as something fine and strong, as well as the opportunity to disagree with the many, that initially makes Protagoras sympathetic to the idea that being overcome by pleasure and acting against one's judgement of what is best, is not possible.

The stage is now set for a curious imaginary dialogue with the many,[24] where Protagoras is given the role of stating how, as it *seems* or *appears* to him, things *seem* or *appear* to the many (*sunedokein*, 354a1, 354a7, 354b5, 354c5, 356c3; *dokein* 354c3, 354d3, 357a4; *phainesthai* 353e5, 357a6, 357b2).[25] In this conversation, the view of the many, which did not initially equate pleasure with the good, is shown to amount to a simple quantitative hedonism. The many are led to this conclusion because they, as it *seems* to Socrates and Protagoras, will not be able to explain their first intuition that some pleasant things are bad and some painful things good by appealing to any other aim or end (*telos*, 354c1) than more pleasure or less pain: the pleasant things the many assumed to be bad are so because they cause more pain overall whereas the painful things they assumed to be good are so because they lead to more pleasure in the long run.

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[23] Dodds (1951, 183–4 and 211), Vlastos (1956, xii–xviii), Guthrie (1956, 23).

[24] Woolf notes the peculiarity of this dialogue, but does not seem to take notice of the fact that it is for the most part Protagoras who "interprets" the views of the many, so that these are not simply put into "their collective mouth" by Socrates (2002, 229). Woolf calls the role of the many as "interlocutor" in the discussion "anomalous" (225), and does not remark on the fact that Socrates on several occasions in different dialogues lets imaginary interlocutors take part in the conversation, either represented by himself or by one of the other interlocutors (e.g. *Cr*. 50a7–54d2, *Gorg*. 452a1–d4, *Soph*., 246e2–248e5, *Theaet*., 162d3–163a, 165e8–168c5 – there are also other examples in the *Protagoras* itself, e.g. the laughing interlocutors at 355c2-e1 and 361a4–c2). Rather than an anomaly in the elenctic procedure, this looks like a device Plato uses in different varieties for different purposes, so that the question is for what purpose he uses it here. Letting someone who is not so sympathetic towards the many speak for them could for one thing bring out this interlocutor's relation to and view of the many; this seems to be a point in a passage in the *Republic*, where Adeimantus answers for the many (*Rep*. 499d4–500a2).

[25] For this rendering of *dokein*, see note 38 below.

Here a number of points should be considered. First of all one should note that the hedonistic thesis is, in fact, a development or revision of the views of the many, and among the views of the many the initial supposition that not all pleasant things are good was shared by Protagoras. Further, the hedonism follows from the inability of the many to state some further *end* (*telos*) than pleasure, a fact thoroughly underlined by Socrates at 354c and at 354e.[26] When Socrates next seeks to excuse his going on about this, and signals that he will now turn to the demonstration of the impossibility of being weaker than pleasure, he reinforces the point:

> But it is still possible, even now, to retract a step (*anathesthai*), if in some way you can state that the good is something other than the pleasant, or that the bad is something other than the distressing. Or is it enough for you to live out your life pleasantly, in the absence of pains? If it is enough, and you can't state that the good and bad is anything other than that which does not issue in these, then listen to what comes next. (354e8–355a5, translation by Robert C. Bartlett 2008, 57)

And upon this follows the argument against the possibility of being overcome by pleasure or pain, standardly referred to as the denial of the possibility of *akrasia*.

The verb Socrates uses when offering the many the possibility of giving an alternative answer in the passage just quoted, *anathesthai*, suggests taking back a move in a board game.[27] The moves one would want to take back are clearly false moves, and so this could be read as Socrates implying that the identification of the good with pleasure is in fact a false move. This could still mean that Socrates is implying that it is a false move *for the many*, *if* they want to keep to their account of the phenomenon they call being weaker than pleasure, but it could also mean that he is implying that it is a false move *simpliciter*. Which reading is most plausible depends on the understanding of what follows, the argument against the possibility of weakness of will. In any event, the metaphor serves to underscore the dependency of what follows on the failure of the many to give an alternative answer to the question what the good is.

The argument that follows concludes to the effect that what appeared to the many as the phenomenon of being overcome by pleasure is really just ignorance concerning pleasure and pain and more specifically ignorance how to measure pleasure and pain correctly. Socrates asks, "Since the salvation of our life has plainly appeared (*phainesthai*) to us as consisting in a right choice of pleasure and pain, of the greater and lesser, larger and smaller, farther and nearer, doesn't it [the salvation] appear first of all as an art of measurement (*metrêtikê technê*)? (357a6–b3) And since it is [a kind of] measurement, it is no doubt by necessity an art and knowledge". It seems to Protagoras that the many would agree (357a5).

It is this art of measuring pleasure and pain that some commentators have thought to be a sincere part of Socrates' ethical teaching, which he regards as a knowledge that really would be the salvation of our lives.

But there are several strange things about this purported knowledge. For one, we may notice that whereas Protagoras earlier agreed with Socrates against the many

[26] A point also noted by Kahn (1996, 241).

[27] Cf. Bartlett (2008, 57).

that knowledge was a strong and ruling thing, the argument directed against the view of the many has actually shown knowledge to be ruler of nothing. As a consequence of the hedonistic thesis and the argument against weakness of will based on it, knowledge does not rule over or outdo pleasure, but rather functions as its servant; it works to maximize pleasure through the art of measurement. As Roslyn Weiss puts it: "Ironically, what threatens pleasure's dominance is no longer knowledge but ignorance" (2006, 59), ignorance about the way one maximizes pleasure.

A second textual detail that seems to count against accepting as sincere Socrates' description of the art of measurement as the true salvation of our lives, is the fact that right after he has emphasized that it is an art and a kind of knowledge, he adds: "what sort of art and knowledge it is, we'll look into another time" (357b5–6). This might be taken to mean that Socrates is hinting that the actual measuring-art or knowledge that he believes is the salvation of our lives is not identified in the *Protagoras* – in the sense that there is such an art, just not the one described here.[28] Another possible interpretation, suggested by Weiss, is that Socrates is emphasizing that the exact nature of the hedonistic measuring-art has been left vague.[29] For, as several scholars have noted,[30] there seem to be some obvious difficulties for the art of measuring pleasure, for example how to weigh or measure future and hypothetical pleasures and pains, and in any case how to quantify pleasures and pains precisely. Interesting to note is the way Socrates in the *Gorgias* holds that one who has *technê* knows what is best, while pleasure can only be guessed at (*Grg*. 464e2–465a6), so that he seems to be saying in that dialogue that a *technê* of pleasure is impossible. The comment that what sort of art and knowledge the *metrêtikê technê* is must be examined further might then be taken as a hint from Socrates that it is not really a *technê* or an *epistêmê* at all.

Socrates now concludes his conversation with the many, going through the main steps of the argument and spelling out directly that the phenomenon that appeared to the many as being weaker than pleasure was really ignorance. Socrates reminds the many that when he and Protagoras agreed that knowledge was strong and ruling, the many objected that pleasure often overpowers (*kratein*) even the man who knows (357c3). Socrates and Protagoras disagreed with them, and the many then asked what this phenomenon is if it is not being worsted by pleasure. As Socrates retraces the answer he and Protagoras gave the many, he again emphasizes the central role of the hedonistic premise in the argument:

> [Y]ou folks have also agreed that those who go astray (*exhamartanein*) in choosing *pleasant and painful things – that is*, *good and bad things* – do so through a defect of knowledge, and not merely of knowledge but of a knowledge you've further agreed just now is an art of

[28] E.g. Kahn (1996, 251). Different varieties of this suggestion are discussed by Ferrari (1990, 125–6) and Weiss (2006, 58n44).

[29] Weiss (2006, 58n44).

[30] Dyson (1976, 40) and Taylor (1991, 195–98).

> measurement. And an action that goes astray in the absence of knowledge, you yourselves surely know is committed through ignorance. (357d2–e2)[31]

We may further note that Socrates here also emphasizes that the many agreed that the knowledge in question, which would remove the ignorance responsible for errors in choices of pleasure and pain, was a measuring art. He then points out that Protagoras, Prodicus and Hippias claim to be doctors of ignorance, and, still within the imagined dialogue, explains to the many that the reason why they do not do well in private and in public is that they have been confused about these matters as well as stingy with their money, and thus have not gone to the sophists or sent their children to them. The conclusion to the conversation with the many is that they should realize that it is all a question of ignorance and go to Protagoras or one of the other sophists, and all will be better.

When Socrates now asks the three sophists whether he seems to them to speak things true or speak falsely, they together reply that what he has said seems wondrously true. And Socrates does not just let them agree to the suggestion that everyone should come to them and pay to be their students; he makes sure they take the whole package. He immediately asks explicitly if they agree that what's pleasant is good, adding "beautiful" (*kalon*): "Aren't all actions aimed at this, at living painlessly and pleasantly, [and are these actions not also] beautiful? And isn't a beautiful deed good and advantageous?" (358b3–6) It appears so to all three.

We can here note that Protagoras now accepts the hedonistic thesis in its simple form that he rejected not so long ago. What came in between was an argument that showed him to be the teacher who could cure the ignorance that was consequent upon the lack of knowledge of measurement – an argument that seems to identify Protagoras as the teacher of the art that is the salvation of our lives. This is perhaps no trifling reason for changing one's mind on the nature of the good, if one professes to be a teacher of men.

[31] A peculiar aspect of this part of the argument is that it does not really answer the question of the many: "[I]f this experience (*pathêma*) isn't being overcome by pleasure, what in the world is it?" (357c 6–7; here posed for the third time, cf. 353a4–6 and 353c1–3). The line of argument Socrates presents only identifies ignorance as the source of mistakes, i.e. thinking that something is best, i.e. most pleasant, when it is not. Neither this, nor the hedonistic thesis, nor the comparison with perspectival distortion explains how the phenomenon the many call being overcome by pleasure comes to feel the way the many say it does. According to them being overcome by pleasure is experienced as not being willing to do what one recognizes as the best course of action, apparently because some other course of action seems more pleasant. Socrates' explanation does not explain why the many experience that they are pulled in two directions; on the hedonistic premise their experience would mean that one line of action seems most pleasant while another seems more pleasant, which does seem laughable. Protagoras is perhaps too content with asserting the power of knowledge and making the many look ridiculous to notice, and the many cannot protest themselves. The fact that an alternative explanation is not offered counts in favour of the reading suggested here, that it is not the many who are ridiculous on this account. Ferrari (1990) also emphasizes the fact that Socrates' conclusion does not explain how weakness of will feels, and argues that this is intended, in order to provoke puzzlement and reflection in the many, and in the reader (130–32).

But Socrates is not yet finished with Protagoras. When the agreement of Protagoras, Hippias and Prodicus to the hedonistic premise is clearly established, it is again this premise Socrates uses in the next argument, which will end with Protagoras' being forced to agree that courage is wisdom. Socrates first goes a step further and suggests that if what is pleasant is good, it is simply not in human nature to go towards things one believes are bad instead of towards good things (358b6–c1, 358c6–d2). The next step is to secure all three sophists' agreement to the suggestion that what people fear are things they regard as bad, which according to the hedonistic thesis are the things they regard as painful. Then the road is open for a description of courage that leaves only one difference between the courageous man and the coward, namely the former's knowledge which things are truly pleasant. In the course of the argument Protagoras several times makes clear that it is the argument that has gone before that makes the conclusions of this argument necessary (359d4–5, 360a5, 360e3–5), trying to distance himself from what has been agreed upon earlier.

When Protagoras in the course of this discussion of courage is asked what courageous people are willing to go towards, he asserts that it is actions that are noble, fine or beautiful (*tas … kalas praxeis* 359e6f.), and thus emphasizes the strong connection between courage as a virtue and what is noble, *to kalon*. At the end of the discussion, however, Protagoras is left with an account of courage that could seem to leave no place for the noble. The courageous man does not distinguish himself from the coward by brave actions in the face of danger, the difference lies only in calculating what is truly pleasant; the coward is merely ignorant, not lacking in moral fibre.[32]

This picture is evidently unsatisfactory to Protagoras, as he seems quite disgruntled by the conclusion that cowardice is ignorance (cf. 360c2–e5). But although this conclusion seems to be a version of the view that virtue is knowledge, we should not rashly assume that the picture of courage that Socrates has presented would be satisfactory to Socrates either.

As we have seen, each step in the argument in this section of the dialogue is based on the hedonistic thesis, a fact emphasized by Socrates as well as by Protagoras several times. And the hedonistic thesis emerges, in the course of Socrates' questioning, from the presumably unreflective views of the many who are unable to identify an end we could aim for that is not reducible to pleasure. It is in no way obvious that Socrates would be equally unable to suggest such an answer.[33] If we are not committed to taking the denial of weakness of will seriously as a Socratic doctrine, very different readings of this section of the *Protagoras* become possible. Here it will be suggested that the argument against the possibility of being overcome by pleasure, the proposal of a measuring-art, and the final argument concerning

[32] Cf. Weiss (2006, 67): "By making courage a matter of knowledge, Socrates has all but effaced the difference between courage and cowardice: the courageous man is simply a coward who is adept at measuring pleasure and pain."

[33] *Pace* Vlastos, on whose reading the passage "doesn't in the least imply that there *is* some such other standard" (1956, xl).

courage function collectively as a reductio ad absurdum of the hedonistic thesis. Concerning the denial that it is possible to be overcome by pleasure we can remember that it is introduced as what follows if one has nothing one can say is good or bad other than pleasure and pain (355a1–4). What follows, says Socrates, is that the view of the many, namely that it is possible to be overcome by pleasure, is laughable, *geloion*. Socrates may be implying that what is really laughable is the denial of the possibility of a phenomenon Socrates elsewhere introduces as obvious, as for example in the *Republic* Book 4 (e.g. 439e5–440b4, cf. also *Crito* 46b–c).[34]

But if the hedonistic thesis does not come from Socrates, but is rather the target of his attack, where does it come from? Here it will be argued that it does not simply come from the many, *hoi polloi*, and that they are not the real target of the attack. First of all, it is not actually presented as their immediate answer to the question about the good and pleasure. Further, in this passage, as in several passages in other dialogues, Socrates is not as contemptuous of the many as is often thought; he thinks they are capable of changing their view if they are properly instructed (cf. 352e5–353a6).[35] Rather, it is Protagoras who has shown contempt for the many.[36]

When considering the question where the hedonistic thesis comes from, it seems significant to remember that Protagoras at first resists simple hedonism, although Socrates still treats him as its supporter; but later accepts it, even though he seemingly comes to regret it. In the passage where the hedonistic thesis is established, it is striking that words denoting *appearing* and *seeming* are found again and again (*phainesthai* and *dokein*).[37] It is tempting to see this as Plato pointing to Protagoras' doctrine that man is the measure, on the interpretation that things *are* to each of us as they *seem* to each. This is the interpretation that is offered of the man-as-measure doctrine in the *Theaetetus* (*Theaet*. 152a6–8), together with the interpretation mentioned above that knowledge on this view is perception. And Protagoras himself may be taken to refer to his doctrine earlier in the dialogue, inasmuch as this doctrine may be understood as what underlies his outburst at 334a3–c6, when he states that what is good is relative to the party for whom or the thing for which it is good. Another detail that points to the same inference is the very name Socrates gives the art that appears to be the salvation of our lives, *hê metrêtikê technê*. It is difficult not

[34] We can here note that Socrates at 357d2–7 suggests that the many might still, after Socrates' and Protagoras' attempt at persuasion (cf. 352e5–6), laugh at the explanation of weakness of will as ignorance, but reminds them that they will now, since they have accepted the premise of hedonism and the art of measurement, also be laughing at themselves.

[35] Cf. *Rep*. 499d8–500a7, where Socrates admonishes Adeimantus for being too harsh with the many, suggesting that they will change their opinion about philosophers when they are taught who the philosophers really are.

[36] This is noted by, for example, Vlastos (1956, xx with n44) and Zeyl (1980, 254).

[37] *Dokein* means "to think", "to have an opinion" and "to seem"; its impersonal use, e.g. *emoi dokei*, can be translated "I think…", but a more literal rendering is "It seems to me…". The connection to *doxa* can moreover suggest that what one thinks depends on how things seem, or how they are thought about in general. At *Theaet*. 166e2–167b4 Socrates connects perceiving and the way things appear (using the verbs *aisthanesthai* and *phainesthai*) closely with opinion and opining (*doxa*, *doxazein*) in his interpretation of Protagoras' view.

to regard this as meant to remind the interlocutors – and the reader – of Protagoras' maxim that man is the measure, *metron*, of all things, "of those that are, that (or how) they are, and of those that are not, that (or how) they are not".[38] If this association is intended, it strongly suggests that Socrates ties the measuring-art to Protagoras rather than to himself – it is also Protagoras and the other sophists present who are soon presented as the teachers of this art, since they claim to cure ignorance (357e2–4), and they themselves acknowledge being such teachers (358a1–5).

In a certain sense it is ironic that Socrates gets Protagoras to agree that a measuring-art is what is needed. For how can man be the measure, in the sense that each man is the sole measure of the nature and manner in which things are for him, and therefore also of the character of what is good for him, and as such is infallible in his measurement, if he regularly fails to measure correctly? The same kind of irony applies to the alternatives with which Socrates presents Protagoras in this passage. Socrates inquires as follows:

> So if doing well consisted for us in this, in acting on and taking large distances while avoiding and not acting on small ones, what would appear to us as our salvation in life? Would it be the art of measurement or the power of what appears (*hê tou phainomenou dunamis*)? Didn't the latter lead us astray and make us mistake the same things back and forth and over and over again and have regrets in both our actions and our choices of large and small things, when measurement would have deprived this appearance of its authority (*akuron men an epoiêse touto to phantasma*), and by revealing what was true (*to alêthes*), would have made the soul hold itself at rest, abiding in truth, and would have been the salvation of our life? In response to this, would human beings (*hoi anthropoi*) agree that measuring is the art that keeps us safe (*sôzein*), or say it's some other?" (356c8–e4)

To this Protagoras replies that they (the many) would agree that it is measurement. But how can Protagoras opt for an alternative to the power of appearance, which deprives appearance of authority, if he holds that what appears is what is, as Socrates' interpretation of his maxim in the *Theaetetus* suggests? Socrates is here making Protagoras give up the view that what appears is what is, since he accepts that what appears good may turn out not to be good when measured correctly.[39] Simultaneously, he is getting Protagoras to abandon the view that man is the measure, since he accepts that people might not of themselves be able to measure correctly, and need an art, which then seems to embody the measure, rather than this measure's being man himself. The irony becomes complete when we consider that the whole argument resulting in Protagoras' acceptance of these views is based on a premise that represents how pleasure, in Protagoras' view, appears to the many; for the appearance of pleasure has been affirmed to be fundamentally deceptive, and Protagoras has repeatedly voiced his utter lack of respect for the capacity of the many to perceive things correctly.

If the above is correct, and this is Socrates' strategy, one may ask why Protagoras agrees to these apparent contradictions of his position. What he gets in return, as we

[38] DK80 b1, cf. Denyer (2008, 192).

[39] Vlastos, although his overall reading of the passage is very different from the one presented here, reads these lines in a somewhat similar way: "what can this "power of appearance" be but an indirect reference to the appearance-is-reality doctrine in its bearing on the good life?" (1956, xviii).

have seen, is the offer of a thoroughly *safe* position; namely to be called the teacher of this art, a teacher to whom all who wish to live well should come in order to enlist as his students.

It is not here suggested that Socrates' point is that Protagoras' doctrine leads inevitably to the hedonistic thesis, but rather that it seems plausible that Socrates is pointing out that Protagoras has difficulties helping the many avoid it. When Socrates repeatedly emphasizes that the many can go another way if they can find another account of the good, it is almost as if he is inviting Protagoras, who claims to be able to help people come towards the beautiful and good (328b1–3), to help them. But what could Protagoras really say, if it seems to the many that the pleasant is the good? All he does say is that it seems to him that it would seem that way to them.

And what about the measuring-art, the salvation of our life? Some reasons why we should be sceptical of the sincerity of Socrates' description of this art have already been presented. There are, however, some hints in the passage where Socrates suggests what would be needed in order to get us on the right track, and these hints cast some light on the suggestion that virtue is knowledge. We need something that would deprive appearance of its authority and reveal the truth, causing the soul to rest in truth (356d6–e2). The sincerity of this description of what we need, need not be doubted along with the identification of this as the art of measurement of pleasure and pain. One may reasonably expect, however, that that which could have this effect of depriving appearance of its authority would have to be a kind of knowledge, or insight, that makes one able to look beyond appearance and recognize not simply that one pleasure is really larger than another although it appears smaller, but, for example, that what is pleasurable is not *eo ipso* good, even if it might appear that way. This is not to say that Socrates implies that pleasure is bad, or never good; in the final passage of the dialogue he states that he would find it most pleasant (*hêdista*, 361d6) to discuss the issues they have talked about further with Protagoras. Finding out what is really most pleasant, and why, could be (at least part of) what is needed to become able to take forethought for the whole of one's life, and Socrates in this final passage of the dialogue states that this is his aim in putting so much effort in examining these matters (361d3–5). That achievement, however, seems to require something quite different from a measurement of pleasure. It would instead require critical reflection on one's opinions and desires, something for which there seems to be no place if what appears is what is.

But if the measuring-art is not a true art of salvation, what is it? We should notice that although it might seem that it is Socrates himself who introduces it as the salvation of our life, this happens in a passage first listing two conditionals: "If doing well consisted for us in this, in acting on and taking large distances while avoiding and not acting on smaller ones…"(356c8–d3), and next: "And what if the salvation of our life consisted for us in choosing what was odd over even…" (356e5–6) Then Socrates turns to the case at hand: "Now since the salvation of our life has plainly appeared (*phainesthai*) to us as consisting in the right choice of pleasure and pain […] doesn't it appear (*phainesthai*) first of all as measurement […]?" (357a5–b2) The conclusion that the art of measurement is the salvation of our life is clearly

marked as depending on the hedonistic thesis, and we see again the language of appearance, which at least invites reflection on the fact that the correctness of the thesis as well as the conclusion depends on the correctness of the appearance.

Miserly Moderation and Calculating Courage: The Art of Measurement as Misdirected Reason

This hypothetically salvational means to measurement is called an art and knowledge (although possibly with a reservation, as mentioned above), but it is, significantly, not called a virtue. And the art of measurement does not look much like virtue, or much like philosophy. In fact, it looks much more like what Socrates in the *Phaedrus* calls the miserly, and merely mortal good sense or moderation, *sôphrosunê*, of the non-lover in the speech of Lysias in the beginning of this dialogue (*Phaedr*. 256e5, cf. 230e6–234c5).[40] We will take a short look at what we learn about this mortal kind of *sôphrosunê* in the *Phaedrus* in order to compare it with the measuring-art found in the *Protagoras*.

In the *Phaedrus* the speechwriter Lysias, a man who, like Protagoras, is clever with words, has enchanted Phaedrus with a speech where an anonymous man advices a young boy to grant his sexual favours to him, who is not in love with him, rather than to a lover, whom he claims is rendered mad and ill by *eros*. The "non-lover" argues that the lover is therefore unaccountable, and that an affair with a lover is likely to harm the boy more than it will benefit him. The non-lover, on the contrary, is not mad, but sound-minded and moderate, *sôphron*, and able to secure various kinds of benefits for the boy, without the risks connected with love. The central strand in the non-lover's argument is prudential concern for one's own interests, with the aim of maximizing benefits and minimizing risks. Although the beneficial and the harmful rather than the pleasant and the painful are the main terms here, the non-lover seems to be demonstrating an art of measurement of benefit and risk, although confined to the limited field of the pederastic relationship, and recommending that the young boy follow him in his calculations and accept his conclusion. He also suggests that his company will make the young boy better (*beltios*, 233a4), in contrast to the company of the lover, who is unable to see pleasures and pains accurately because of his passionate predicament (233a4–b6). The non-lover implies that he is able to do exactly this, and will associate with the boy "with an eye not to present pleasure (*tên parousan hêdonen*), but also to the benefit which is to come" (233b6–c1),[41] and thus presents himself as able to avoid the perspectival distortion regarding pleasure from which the art of measurement in the *Protagoras* is supposed to be able to save us.

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[40] The parallel to the "non-lover" in Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus* is also noted by Ferrari (1990, 133n29).

[41] Translations from the *Phaedrus* are from Rowe (1986).

The similarity between the *sôphrosunê* of the non-lover and the art of measurement as it is presented in the *Protagoras* should hereby be clear. The Socrates of the *Phaedrus*, however, does not present the mortal *sôphrosunê* as a salvation; on the contrary he states that a relationship based on this good sense "engenders in the soul which is the object of the attachment a meanness (*aneleutheria*) that is praised by the majority as a virtue" (256e6–257a1). Rather than save the soul, it will doom it to roam around and under the earth for thousands of years (257a1–2). In contrast to this relationship, Socrates has described that of the philosophical lover, who has let his soul be touched by the divine madness of *eros* and thereby turned his reason to higher insights (249d4–256b7).

In the course of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates makes clear that he is attempting to divert Phaedrus' interest in clever rhetorical speeches into an interest in philosophy. In the discussion of speeches and rhetoric in the latter part of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates points to the importance of fashioning one's speech in accordance with the soul of the listener, "whether for the purposes of teaching or persuading" (277c5–6). Arguably this is also what he has done in the course of the dialogue; to Phaedrus, the lover of speeches and rhetoric (228a5–c1, 242a7–b4, 258e1–2), he has offered two speeches and a discussion of rhetoric. At the end of Socrates' second speech he expresses his hope that Phaedrus will turn his life towards *eros* accompanied by philosophical speeches (257b1–6), which is clearly intended to remind us of the life of the philosophical lover, which Socrates has contrasted with the sound-minded and risk-minimizing non-lover (256a7–b7, 256e3–257a1).

Even so, at the end of the dialogue, it is not made evident whether Socrates has succeeded in his effort to turn Phaedrus to philosophy, and away from the clever, but not truth-seeking rhetoric of Lysias; the last words of the dialogue are Socrates' simple: "Let's go". This is another point where one may see a parallel between the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedrus*. For in the *Protagoras* we find a similar uncertainty in the very end of the dialogue; the last words, "we went away", do not in their context make it quite clear who "we" are – has Hippocrates, who in the beginning of the dialogue was so eager to get hold of Protagoras' wisdom, come with Socrates or not? Perhaps this points to a deeper parallel to the *Phaedrus*: Has Socrates in his conversation with Protagoras fashioned his speech to suit the soul of Hippocrates, making the direction and conclusion of the argument especially apt to dissuade him from his plan to become Protagoras' pupil? And could the argument resulting in the art of measurement being hailed as the salvation of our lives be part of this "rhetorical strategy"? When we consider some points from the characterization of Hippocrates and Socrates' attitude towards him in the beginning of the dialogue, this suggestion can be seen as making good sense of the development of the argument in the last part of the dialogue.

Hippocrates is depicted as an impetuous young man and a man of action. He comes barging into Socrates' room before dawn, and Socrates says that he noticed his forcefulness or courage (*andreia*) and excitement (*ptoiêsis*) (310d3); earlier Hippocrates has rushed off chasing his slave (310c3–5). The latter further suggests

a man who is preoccupied with his standing and how people behave towards him.[42] That his interest lies in honour and reputation is suggested by his eagerness to be made wise by Protagoras, which he apparently understands as to become clever at speaking (312d5–7), and this also seems to be Socrates' view of him, since he tells Protagoras that Hippocrates seems to have a desire to get a good name in the city (316b10–c2). Nothing in the description of Hippocrates suggests that he is a man whose life is particularly concerned with pleasure, while it does suggest that he would be the kind of man that would be interested in the virtue of courage.

In the conversation Socrates has with Hippocrates in his bedroom, before they venture out to meet the great sophist, Socrates warns Hippocrates of the dangers of buying the wares of which perhaps neither he nor the salesman is competent to evaluate the quality, all the more so because he is not buying food for the body, but things to be learned (*mathêmata*, 313c7), to be consumed by the soul. Socrates' analogy, the doctor who is competent to judge what is healthy and true nourishment for the body and what is not (313d1–4), may make us wonder whether he himself possesses such a competence concerning the soul. In all events, we may ask ourselves why he lets Hippocrates walk into this possibly grave danger, when he seems quite obviously not competent to judge for himself. One answer could be that Socrates uses his ability to customize his speech so that Hippocrates has the greatest chance of coming to the conclusion that the power Protagoras purports to possess is merely an appearance, or at least not the kind of power he would find appealing.

On the one hand, there is no indication that an identification of the good with pleasure should be congenial to Hippocrates' outlook. On the other, it is plausible that an account of wisdom that reduces it to the ability to measure pleasure and pain may seem less manly and appealing to someone who has been promised that he will learn *euboulia*, well-advisedness, both about his own affairs and the affairs of his city "so that he can be the most powerful in his city's affairs in both action and speaking" (318e5–319a2). And finally, to this man who is initially described with reference to his *andreia*, courage, forcefulness or manliness, it is likely that an account of courage according to which the courageous and the cowards approach the same thing, while neither approaches what is frightening, the only difference between them being that the courageous is better at measuring, is not the most attractive. The bold, impetuous Hippocrates has been shown a Protagoras who is careful and clever, but still powerless to defend himself against the strategies of Socrates, and who in the course of the discussion has abandoned his main tenets, only to end up with a notion of the good, wise and courageous life as one dominated by calculating pleasure and minimizing risk, with which he is obviously unhappy. Protagoras even concludes the conversation by congratulating Socrates, predicting that he will become notable for wisdom. Although this remark has been read as a sign of a good-tempered and respectful atmosphere in this dialogue (cf. Guthrie 1956, 20–21), it is tempting to see this rather as Protagoras' way of minimizing the damage, quite true to character in the light of his concern for safety. Whether this

[42] This is also suggested by his wisecrack to the effect that Protagoras has done him an injustice by being wise and not making him so (310d5–6).

recommendation of Socrates, together with Protagoras' performance, has been enough to turn Hippocrates away from Protagoras and make him go with Socrates, we are left to wonder.

If the suggestion above is on the right track and Socrates' argument in the last part of the dialogue can be seen as directed at and aiming to have an effect on Hippocrates in this way, it is still doubtful that this is the whole story; the complexities of the argument and of the ways in which Protagoras' conceited bearing and gradual humiliation emerge, if lost on Hippocrates, can still be meant for us, the readers. Here we will let the notions of calculation and minimizing risk direct us to two concluding points. The first has to do with calculation and bears on remarks made earlier on the dialogue's statements concerning the conception of human reason. Several readers of Plato appear to have formed the impression that Plato's position involves an intellectual elitism implying that only those who are endowed with an exceptional intelligence can be truly virtuous and happy.[43] Whether this is the case is a complex question that cannot be addressed here. The point here is simply that the dialogue *Protagoras* does offer some material pertinent to such a discussion. Protagoras is certainly not depicted as lacking in intelligence, but he still, as we can see, turns out to be lacking in his insight into virtue. Intellectual sharpness does not seem to be what it takes – a point which is also emphasized in the description of "the men who are said to be vicious but wise" in Book 7 of the *Republic* (519a1–5): the important thing here is not the sharpness of vision, but where the eye of the soul is turned.

In what way is Protagoras then lacking? Here we come to the notion of minimizing risk. It is conspicuous how Protagoras is repeatedly described as concerned with safety. Even when he brags about his courage in declaring himself openly to be a sophist, he at the same time tells Socrates that he also made provisions to ensure his safety (317b3–c1) – presumably offering this information to appear clever.[44] He certainly seems to be in possession of the art of measurement, calculating and weighing pleasures against pains, as well as of the type of courage Socrates and Protagoras are left with at the end of the dialogue, which consists in knowing how to avoid risk rather than how to face it. So perhaps Protagoras' *euboulia*, which he is proud to be able to teach, turns out to be precisely the art of measurement, concerned with pleasures and pains. We have seen that his regard for the people of Athens, to whom he in his great speech first seems to accord both knowledge of the citizen's virtues and the ability to teach this to others, can be questioned in the light of his disparaging statements about the many. Protagoras claims to teach how to become a good citizen, but being well advised about the good and noble seems to turn out, according to his teaching, to be nothing more than being able to calculate self-interest cleverly.

The role the art of measurement plays in the last part of the dialogue counts in favour of this reading, for this art only plays a role in the argument to get Protagoras to admit that courage is wisdom, and thereby to contradict his previous statement. If Socrates should be read as sincerely presenting the art of measurement of pleasure

[43] Cf. e.g. Cooper (1999, 141) and Bobonich (2002, 3–8).

[44] Coby (1987, 16) emphasizes this point.

as the salvation of our life and as presenting, in his own view, a satisfactory account of courage, it would be natural to expect a reminder of how important it is to learn this art, both in order to become courageous and in order to be able to take forethought for one's life in general. Moreover, given the conclusion of the discussion, namely that according to what has been agreed upon, courage is wisdom and cowardice ignorance, an obvious way of making the sophists sympathetic to this conclusion would be to give them the chance of promoting themselves as teachers of courage. For they claim to be able to cure ignorance, and this would in the light of Socrates' and Protagoras' conclusion mean that they can cure cowardice, and a reasonable inference in the light of the preceding discussion would then be that they can teach courage. As already noted, Protagoras is obviously not content with the account of courage that he must accept on the basis of their previous agreements, but Socrates does not attempt to allay his discontent by repeating his advice to the many to go to the sophists in order to be cured of their ignorance. This was, as we have seen, the move Socrates made earlier, with which he succeeded in pleasing the sophists and securing their agreement to the hedonistic thesis, as well as to the denial of weakness of will and the account of the art of measurement developed on its basis. Why does Socrates not make this move again? An answer could be that Socrates wanted their agreement simply in order to drive home his comprehensive refutation of Protagoras.

What do we get instead of the advice to learn the art of measurement on the last pages of the dialogue? In part in the form of the questions from a laughing anonymous interlocutor (361a3–c2), we get something that looks like a withdrawal of the previous agreements and an encouragement to reconsider what is teachable, what virtue and knowledge is, and how we may best take forethought for our lives.[45] This arguably is an encouragement to engage one's reasoning abilities, but not in an art of measuring pleasure; rather in an activity that looks like philosophical enquiry into questions central to how we may live well. This enquiry is one Protagoras prefers to postpone to another occasion (361e5–6).

When Socrates recounts his and Hippocrates' arrival at the house of Callias in the beginning of the dialogue, he describes Protagoras amidst a band of followers and explains that Protagoras is able to cast a spell over people with his voice just like Orpheus (315a8–b1, cf. 316d3–7). Soon after, Socrates curiously likens the house of Callias to Hades. In the *Symposium*, Phaedrus states that Orpheus was thought to be a coward who did not dare to die to get to Hades, but schemed to get in there alive (*Symp*. 179d2–7). And then he did not manage to save his beloved Eurydice from the land of the dead, because he, quite literally, turned his eyes in the wrong direction. It is tempting to suggest that in the picture we get of him in the dialogue that carries his name, Protagoras is as enchanting as Orpheus, but also a coward who uses his cleverness in the wrong way – turning the eye of his soul in the wrong direction – and thus he cannot save anyone.

[45] This point is also noted by Weiss (1990, 17). 360e8–361a3 and 361c2–d2 make it clear that Socrates neither presents as established the account of virtue as wisdom, which rested on the hedonistic thesis, nor treats Protagoras' agreement to this account as standing.

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The Science of Measuring Pleasure and Pain

Cynthia Freeland

Near the end of the *Protagoras* there is a famous argument in which Socrates appears to deny the possibility of weakness of will (*akrasia)*.[1] The passage is part of a longer examination of whether virtue can be taught and of the unity of the virtues. Socrates and Protagoras discuss whether it makes sense to say, as people commonly do, that they sometimes choose to do things they know are not best for them because they are "overcome by pleasure." Supposedly "the many" hold that the good is pleasure, and that one chooses what is less good because it is most pleasant. Socrates takes Protagoras through a kind of elenctic examination that purports to show that the many's claim to being overcome by pleasure in akrasia is absurd or ridiculous. They can't really do what they claim to do, choose the less good for the more good; thus, and the claim that they do is a misdescription of what really happens. People act in these cases due to ignorance of what is truly the most good (pleasant). In order to prevent people from choosing things that are not best for them, or to save them, Socrates says that what is needed is an art or science of measurement (357a–b). In this paper I want to focus on the idea of such an art or science of measurement.

There is an extended literature on the *Protagoras* and on this passage in particular. Some interpreters argue that while Socrates himself does not mean to endorse hedonism, he does want an art of measurement. Others claim that these two ideas are inseparable. If Socrates does endorse hedonism, which version of it does he intend? Is the argument denying weakness of will valid?

Another much-discussed question is whether the argument is an example of a Socratic elenchus. The peculiarities of regarding it as such have been nicely summarized by Raphael Woolf in his article "Consistency and Akrasia in Plato's

[1] Interestingly, this term is not actually used in the dialogue.

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Protagoras" (Woolf 2002). He focuses on the nature of the Socratic dialectic at work. If the argument illustrates elenchus it has two peculiarities, namely (i) that the nature of the inconsistency allegedly demonstrated in the passage is surprisingly unclear, and (ii) that the target of the elenctic examination is not the actual interlocutor, Protagoras, but a vaguely named group called "the many" whose views are presumed. Since Protagoras cannot be taken to speak for them, we do not find here the strategy of a typical elenchus, which targets inconsistencies in the speaker himself. Woolf's solution is to diagnose the argument as showing not an inconsistency in *theses held* by someone (or the many someones), but rather an inconsistency between a *thesis that is held* and *deeds done*: not a verbal but a practical inconsistency.

However, there are other accounts of what is going on in this passage. For example, Daniel C. Russell interprets Socrates as bringing in hedonism as a strategy to refute the alleged hedonist followers of Protagoras, rather than to reveal Protagoras', Socrates', or Plato's own hedonism.

The diversity of interpretations poses a challenge concerning how to go about construing the argument against weakness of will and the subsequent claim that we need some kind of hedonic calculus. To frame the problem of interpretation, I will turn first to an overview offered by Jonathan Lavery's article, "Plato's *Protagoras* and the Frontier of Genre Research: A Reconnaissance Report from the Field" (Lavery 2007). Lavery summarizes the long history of interpretations of *Protagoras* and describes broad trends over the decades. Some of these involve methodology, and some involve, instead, a kind of sociology of academic activity. Two general kinds of approach have dominated the last century in the scholarly literature. Lavery calls one approach "Democritean" because it separates the dialogue into fragmentary parts or atoms and treats them each independently, e.g., the Great Speech, the debate about the unity of virtue, the discussion of Simonides' poem, etc. In the other approach, which he labels "Aristotelian," the focus is instead on the functional unity of the dialogue as a whole, with a presumption that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As an example of the Democritean approach Lavery cites the extremely influential introduction Gregory Vlastos contributed to Martin Ostwald's 1956 English translation of the dialogue (Vlastos 1956). Followers of the Democritean approach have singled out certain key passages for attention – particularly those on the unity of virtue, the relationship between wisdom and courage, as well as the passage that concerns me about hedonism and weakness of will. The problem with this approach is that much of the dialogue is overlooked in favor of a focus on interpreting passages of the most dense argumentation. Lavery thus notes that James Arieti's criticism of such work can be validated – namely, that such treatments suffer from "anachronism and aridity" (Arieti 1991).

By comparison, "Aristotelian" approaches, following Paul Shorey, attend more to the dramatic and literary aspects of the *Protagoras* (Shorey 1933). Until fairly recently, these remained primarily the province of classicists. But around 1982, Lavery says, things began to shift and philosophers too began paying more attention

to the structure of the work in holistic accounts. He gives a typology of these accounts to which I shall return in a moment.

Lavery also briefly describes a third approach, the "Platonic" one, using the label supplied by Brumbaugh in 1993. This strategy attends to Plato's attempts to make his writings truthful to the real world. Hence it emphasizes factors such as historical reference and accuracy involving location, events, personages, etc., all of which must be held to be interpretively relevant. I will not say anything more about this third approach in what follows.

The Aristotelian Approach and the Denial of Weakness of Will

Lavery subdivides Aristotelian or holistic approaches to the *Protagoras* into four different sub-types, each of which attends most to certain things: (i) *thematic issues* (introduction of a theme which is then traced through the dialogue's parts), (ii) *intra-dialogic links* (two episodes related to one another), (iii) *general overviews* (episodes explored in relation to one another and to the whole), and (iv) *perspectival overviews* (episodes explored from the perspective within one episode).

Lavery's typology is instructive in forcing us to think harder about our own interpretive strategies in reading the text. Suppose that I wish to single out a particular passage while resisting the risks associated with being too atomistic. What are my options? One that seems promising is to employ what Lavery would call the thematic approach: I will trace the theme of measurement through the dialogue. But to this I would like to add a method that Lavery has not enumerated, which I propose to add to his four as subtype (v): *the inter-dialogic*. I mean, of course, that I will look to passages from *other* Platonic dialogues seeking to clarify both what could be meant by a science of measurement and whether it is something Socrates or Plato would actually endorse. (The consequences for hedonism will fall out as I proceed.)

Before proceeding with my own interpretation, I want to mention a nice example of a holistic approach of type (iii), which involves linking together two episodes. This is Oded Balaban's "The Myth of Protagoras and Plato's Theory of Measurement" (Balaban 1987). Balaban illuminates issues about measurement via a close examination of the creation myth told by Protagoras. Three attitudes about measurement are exemplified by the three key figures who allotted humans our powers or natures: Epimetheus, Prometheus, and Zeus. The Epimethean is devoted to pleasure, but does not conflate it with good:

> The pleasure he derives from an activity cannot be quantified and therefore cannot be compared with the pleasure inherent in another activity; pleasures are qualitatively different from one another and are irreducible to a quantitative common denominator. Hence Plato's theory of measurement is completely irrelevant to his way of thinking and incomprehensible to him. (Balaban 1987, 373)

Since Prometheus, unlike his brother, had forethought, his gift to humans, the crafts or *technai*, illustrates a method of measurement through means-ends or instrumental thinking.

> The standard by which his activity must be measured is success or failure in achieving the end. Prometheus sacrifices the present in behalf of the future. Every quality becomes in his eyes something measurable and quantitatively comparable to every other thing; quality is reduced by him to quantitative units…. Plato's theory of measurement is compatible with the quantitative logic of Prometheus. (Balaban 1987, 374)

In the third and final gift, Zeus told Hermes to give us humans the senses of shame and justice. This gift in turn provided humans another kind of approach to measurement. To the two previous kinds of reasoning, about pleasure and utility, it added a third kind, concerned with morality. The upshot of Balaban's inter-episodic comparison, and a position I may need to address below, is that *there is no basis in the myth for a unified theory of measuring goods*. Perhaps Balaban is hinting that the *Protagoras* provides a forecast of the *Republic*'s division of the soul, where each of the three parts has distinctive desires and goals—although he does not say this explicitly. He says, "there is no harmony between good, pleasure and advantage. None of these values can be reduced to the others" (Balaban1987, 376). To sum up, in Balaban's account Protagoras resists Socrates' attempt to prove the unity of all virtues as a form of knowledge because he (Protagoras) sees virtues as falling into three distinct types.

The Language of Measure and Measuring

I find much to admire in Balaban's account of the measurement passage, but some important points have been left out. (To be fair, Balaban is not purporting to relate this passage to the purpose or meaning of the dialogue as a whole.) For instance, it is also useful to notice how prominent the topic of measurement is as a thematic issue recurring throughout the work. From its start the dialogue is replete with language about comparing the worth or value of things, particularly in relation to knowing what a person most truly wants or values. The introduction turns immediately to questions about how to value things, as the dialogue opens with talk about measuring who is the best-looking or finest. Socrates offers a brief argument that purports to show that the wisest person is really the best-looking (309c).[2] And then next, Hippocrates demands Socrates' help: he claims that Protagoras has already done him an injury by not making him wiser. Socrates promises to help Hippocrates find out what the real value of learning from the sophists might be, emphasizing that it is important to assess the value of the services you are giving your money away for (313a–314c).

[2] For an interesting analysis of this argument as anticipating later moves in the dialogue, i.e. "the general theme of wisdom prevailing over the temptations of more immediate pleasures," see Martha Nussbaum (1986, 92); discussed by Richardson (1990, 24 and n. 45).

Next, after the two men arrive at Kallias's house, much of the context is competitive, involving again a kind of contest of valuation. In effect, Socrates and Protagoras are being measured against one another as they engage in extended verbal sparring. The observers say that they are pleased at the prospect of hearing wise men talk; but surely part of their enjoyment is seeing who will "win" the verbal debate. And Protagoras explicitly describes what is going on at one point as a contest of speeches (*agon logon*, 335a3). This contest of giants may echo the one described in his Great Speech, where Protagoras narrates the tale of the contributions to creation of Epimetheus and Prometheus as a kind of great competition.

Famously, Protagoras promises to make the person who studies with him a better man each day. Socrates advises Hippocrates to ascertain how exactly one will improve: he will become "better at what?" (318b–d). This carries forward the theme that there must be some sort of background system of values against which one weighs various options. Protagoras—naturally, given his famous "Man is the measure" doctrine—is committed to saying that the student himself provides the relevant measure.[3] Famously, his students would judge whether they had learned and become "better" by swearing to it in a temple and then paying what they think their training has been worth. In yet another allusion to this theme of competition, value, and measurement, Socrates makes Protagoras testy when he complains that he is only able to understand short questions and speeches and asks Protagoras to cope with this limitation. Protagoras's retort involves asking wittily just how long his answers must be. "Are they to be shorter than the questions require? … Should they be as long as I think they should be, or as long as you think they should be?" (334d5–e3).

The Science of Measurement

Having shown the pervasiveness of the theme of valuing and assessing goods, I now want to focus on the measurement passage itself. The discussion involves several controversial moves by Socrates, not all of which I can address here. Socrates suggests that it is absurd for people to choose something that is bad, or less good, because of being overcome by the good. He says this would only make sense if they were overcome by something that is truly more good (355d–e). This leads to a detailed analysis of what could be meant by the phrase "more good." Socrates,

[3] Of course, Protagoras is best known for his famous saying that "Man is the measure of all things" ("*panton chrematon anthropon metron*", *Theaetetus* 160d6–7). We should recall what Socrates asks about Protagoras in *Theaetetus*: If what each man believes to be true through sensation is true for him … then *how*, my friend, was Protagoras so wise that he should consider himself worthy (*axiousthai*) to teach others and for huge fees? And how are we so ignorant that we should go to school to him, if each of us is the measure of his own wisdom (*metron onti eautoi hekastoi tês autou sophias*, *Theaetetus* 161e)? See also Coby (1987), who suggests that the science of measurement in *Protagoras* is itself an implicit reference to Protagoras' doctrine that man is the measure of all things (153).

perhaps unreasonably, forces a construal of the phrase as having only one meaning: that there is *more* of the good in question, or it is *bigger*. "Can it be in virtue of anything other than the fact that the one is greater and the other smaller?" he asks (355d–e). In other words, Socrates interprets the hedonist view that has been ascribed to the many as asserting that in some cases (which we would call cases of weakness of will), a person claims that he is overwhelmed by *greater pleasure* into choosing something that affords *less pleasure*: But this is ridiculous, because the fact of the matter is that he has chosen what is overall less pleasant.

The next move of the alleged advocate of hedonism is to try to justify what has been called ridiculous by saying that the many get confused about the sizes of pleasure or pain due to nearness: "But there is all the difference, Socrates, between immediate and postponed pleasure and pain" (356a, Plato 1982). The postponed pleasure of a long-term good seems less big than it really is. But Socrates dismisses this excuse as nonsensical. The only way to claim that a farther-away pain (such as a headache) is "less than" a nearer pleasure (such as a lot of beer) is in terms of pleasure and pain. Socrates gets Protagoras to accept that this is indeed the position the many are committed to by their hedonism, and thus that it is incompatible with weaknesses of will.

However, at this point (357c) Socrates appears to make a concession to Protagoras by suggesting an alternative explanation more sympathetic to the many, acknowledging that and how nearness in fact *can* alter our perception of the size of something. The choices made by people who are allegedly overcome by pleasure occur because they are victims of something that Socrates compares to a visual illusion. In the case of a visual illusion, at least, the deceptive appearance can be corrected by an art of measurement (*metrêtikê technê*) which "preserves us" and gives us "safety in life" against the power of appearances (356d–e). Since the relevant sort of measurement has to be a quantitative kind, given that is related to knowledge of excess and deficiency, Socrates argues that it actually amounts to or is a form of mathematics (a type of *episteme*) (357a).

Now, in a second concessive move Socrates broadens the role of knowledge of mathematics by saying that it can be brought to bear on the measurement of pleasures and pains, both near and far, by assessing each of these things. He asks, "is not the inquiry in the first place about measurement, since it is concerned with excess, deficiency, and equality?" (357b). Socrates calls the relevant expertise both an art or skill (*technê*) and a science (*epistêmê)*, but then, regrettably, says that they will put off until another time more discussion about what exactly this art involves (357b).

I described this second move as "concessive" because Socrates claims that both he and Protagoras have maintained all along, against the many, that there is something stronger than pleasure, and that it is in fact knowledge (357c). The whole argument has been necessary to make more plausible the answer (presumably, both his and Protagoras's) that what makes people give in to pleasure is not in fact greater pleasure but rather lack of knowledge or ignorance (*amathia*) – specifically, ignorance of quantitative knowledge or of proper measurement (357d).

Even if Socrates does not yet offer details about this art of measurement, one thing seems clear within the discussion, namely, that there is one and only one standard for comparison: size. Socrates says,

> They are not different in any other way than by pleasure and pain, for there is no other way that they could differ. Weighing is a good analogy; you put the pleasures together and the pains together, both the near and the remote, on the balance scale, and then say which of the two is more. For if you weigh pleasant things against pleasant, the greater and the more must always be taken; if painful against painful, the fewer and the smaller. (Prot. 356a7–b8)

What would it mean to have a measuring stick by which to compare pleasures? Socrates speaks mainly about judging whether something is *larger or smaller* than something else. Hence he is often taken to be proposing a kind of proto-utilitarian view, according to which there are no significant *qualitative* differences among pleasures, only *quantitative* ones. But as numerous commentators have remarked, it would be extremely hard to construct such a measure. Francisco Gonzalez says that Socrates leaves the exact nature and identity of the science of measurement unexamined because it would be *impossible*, for several reasons: (1) It would require us to be able to predict the future; (2) It would require immortality, or at least a guaranteed life span; (3) It is unclear how quantification can proceed objectively given that pleasure and pain seem purely subjective (Gonzalez 2014). Gonzalez asks, “How does one measure such a slippery, protean phenomenon? Is not the science of measurement an absurd attempt to render objective what is most subjective in human life?” (57).

Weighing against the conception of a rather Benthamite utilitarian scheme of measurement is the fact that pleasures do seem to have significant qualitative differences. And as Gonzalez has noted, since pleasure is something *felt* by a person, there are no obvious objective ways to measure it. Even Taylor, who tries to defend the idea, finds it problematic (Taylor 1983). Surely Plato did not have in mind something futuristic like putting people into fMRI machines that would produce scientific reports on their pleasure experiences as indicated by brain activities!

Continuing the attack on the utilitarian quantitative measurement model, Daniel C. Russell comments in “Protagoras and Socrates on Courage and Pleasure” that Socrates’ denial of important differences between things like present and future pleasures is not plausible (Russell 2000).

> Ordinary experience seems to suggest that indulging an appetite now, for instance, as well as refraining, can both be pleasant acts, but nonetheless that often they are pleasant in quite different ways. Someone who denies this must assert that the ‘rush’ of indulgence, beliefs that one is ‘sinning’, feelings of casting aside inhibitions, and so on are not essential parts of the former pleasure, and likewise for the beliefs and feelings that seem tied to the latter pleasure. … Socrates is again attributing to the many a thesis that is far too controversial for the space he affords it. (Russell 2000, 326)

However, some commentators advise us not to conflate the Platonic hedonic calculus with Bentham’s. Henry Richardson argues in his paper “Measurement, Pleasure, and Practical Science in Plato’s *Protagoras*” that the hedonism of the Protagoras “does not carry commensurability with it” (Richardson 1990, 11). Richardson thinks that *Protagoras* allows for different and contrasting types of pleasure. One

can weigh packages of pleasures against one another and say which is preferable, yet deny that such weighing presumes their commensurability. Indeed, Richardson argues that Socrates mentions three ways in which pleasures can differ. Richardson suggests a way to construe this tripartite standard as allowing for qualitative differences among pleasures and hence resisting a crude numerical commensurability. As a plausible line of interpretation, he draws on Ralph Barton Perry's schema according to which pleasures can be judged as differing according to intensity, preference, and inclusiveness. Construed this way, Socrates' standard makes sense without crude hedonism, and Richardson emphasizes that, "Plato pointedly refuses to make Socrates state a univocal standard of choice that would imply commensurability" (Richardson 1990, 19).

Richardson does feel the need to explain how and why on his view, Socrates proposes an art or science of measurement at all. This measurement could act to provide a decision procedure, but it might also be understood "simply as estimation" (Richardson 1990, 29). Richardson sees this latter interpretation as fitting better with Socrates' analogy with visual illusions. In the passage at 357b, Socrates says that there will be more to be said "later" about the details of the science of the measurement of pleasure. Richardson interprets this to mean that Socrates is not purporting to sketch a complete decision procedure about maximizing choices based upon quantitative grounds. The measurement involved is estimating the goodness of each choice, not a method for comparing them all to reach a decision.[4] Hence Richardson concludes,

> My suggestion is that the precision that Socrates suggests will "save our lives"—like the precision of measurement mentioned in the later dialogues—has more to do with estimating prospective instances of goodness (which might be of incommensurably different types) than it does with choosing among alternative instances. (Richardson 1990, 26)

The Inter-dialogic Approach

It is obviously difficult to explain the correct construal of Socrates' vaguely sketched proposal for a science of measuring pleasure and the good. Despite the best efforts to interpret such a science in terms that do not presuppose crude hedonism (as with Richardson's interpretation), numerous scholars, including Gonzalez and others, still believe that the very conception of a science of measurement requires commensurability, and hence presupposes the thesis of (crude) hedonism. Gonzalez flat-out asserts that the scholars who deny that Socrates endorsed hedonism and yet still

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[4] Richardson (1990) uses *The Statesman* to describe a higher criterion for a science of measurement at 284e–287a: it should give a unified and systematic account of a field while also adding quantitative precision (31). But the measurement here provides only qualitative evaluation. Compare this to *Phaedo* 69a, which speaks of trading virtues for things that are larger, as if they were coins. But in the *Phaedo* Socrates clearly does not mean that wisdom is a kind of good to be maximized. "Rather, it is itself a regulative grasp of the true good or goods that serves to specify appropriate definitions of the virtues" (Richardson 1990, 31).

ascribe to him belief in some kind of science of virtue are inconsistent: "In other words, they want to attribute to Socrates the view that there exists a science of measuring the good with the power of making us good" (Gonzalez 2014, 49). This not a viable move, he charges, because the idea of the calculus or science in question goes hand in hand with hedonism.

> Socrates' account of the science of measurement is inseparable from the thesis of hedonism: only because the good is not distinguished from pleasure must the choice of a bad action be explained as the result of a failure to judge its relative pain/pleasure and only because bad action is the result of such ignorance must the good be identified with a science of measurement. (Gonzalez 2014, 49)[5]

My own view is that Gonzalez is mistaken to hold that the relevant theses are inconsistent. That is, like Richardson, I hold that (a) Socrates *does* seek some kind of science of measurement of values, but that (b) he would resist crude hedonism or the reduction of all values to pleasure. In other words, whatever system one might design to use to assess comparative values will not amount to a hedonistic calculus. Richardson puts this point by saying that it involves a shift from seeing the relevant science of measurement proposed by Socrates as "a maximizing rule of choice" to "a counting principle" (Richardson 1990, 25). He shows that measurement is importantly conceived of by Plato, as by other Greeks, as central to any *technê* and that it can involve the use of even somewhat crude tools (citing *Philebus* 41e–42c and 55d–56c). "The emphasis certainly seems to be on the precise description of objects, rather than on the precise making of a choice" (Richardson 1990, 26).

Part of what supports my intuition is the evidence I reviewed earlier about the heavy emphasis we find early in the dialogue about the need for some kind of standard for assessing what something is worth and what different choices will produce. Remember that the central question is whether going to the sophist to study make you better or worse (and at what?). I think Socrates genuinely wants an answer to this question. In further support of my intuition, we should note something specific about the passage in which Socrates claims we need an art of measurement "to save us." Although most scholars, including even to some extent Richardson, have focused on what the art of measurement *measures*, I think that we should look instead at what its *function* is.[6] Socrates says we need an art of measurement (*metrêtikê technê*) in order *to counteract the power of appearances* (356d). My suggestion is that this is the more serious part of the program and something that Plato himself definitely endorses. We may not need, or may be unable to come up with, a precise science for measuring pleasures using a hedonic calculus, but we *can* come up with ways to counteract the power of appearances. For this what is needed is—not surprisingly—reason. To revert to the examples from earlier in the dialogue, an art of measuring value would show that the wise man is more attractive than the handsome

[5] For more, see Gonzalez (2014, footnote 30, part B, p. 50).

[6] Richardson (1990) does refer to the science as having a "fact-finding role," but he does not pursue the thread I do here, concerning the particular power of this *technê* to counteract deceptive appearances.

person whose looks at first attract us, and also that the sophist who purports to offer training for success in Athenian society cannot deliver on his glib promises.

How exactly does reason assist us in overcoming illusions about pleasure or the good? Socrates draws a comparison between our vulnerability to pleasure illusions and to visual or optical illusions. On the face of it, this comparison is not obviously helpful. As Julia Annas has said, “desire has nothing to do with optical illusions” (Annas 1981, p. 339). Jessica Moss, who also finds the analogy problematic, notes that we may know through reason that something is a visual illusion but still *perceive* it in the same way we did originally. Moss says, plausibly I think,

> … sometimes even after rational deliberation shows us that an immediate pleasure is to be avoided we still feel the pull of that pleasure, just as sometimes even after calculation shows us that the two lines in the Müller-Lyer illusion are equal we still see one as longer. (Moss 2006, 510)

I propose that the resource brought by reason is not necessarily to banish the illusion (whether of pleasure or of vision) but to counteract its influence upon our judgments and actions. In support of this proposal, I will now employ what I called above the inter-dialogic approach. We can find quite a bit more evidence about the ability of reason to aid us in overcoming the power of appearances in various passages from other dialogues besides the *Protagoras*. There are numerous places in which Plato writes about our need for an ability to measure things so as to ward off appearances, which are understood as deceptive or illusory. Similar kinds of claims are given in *Phaedo* 69a, *Republic* 7.522c, *Statesman* 285a, and *Philebus* 55d–e, to mention just some.[7] Sometimes the appearances under discussion are sensory illusions, primarily visual ones, but at other times, as in the *Protagoras*, they are pleasure-illusions.

Let us take one example. In the *Phaedo* 69a Socrates offers a critique of people who refrain from particular pleasures solely out of the fear of losing out on other pleasures. He says that the only valid currency for such exchanges is wisdom:

> My good Simmias, I fear this is not the right exchange to attain virtue, to exchange pleasures for pleasures, and pains for pains, and fears for fears, the greater for the less like coins, but that the only valid currency for which all these things should be exchanged is wisdom. … Exchanged for one another without wisdom such virtue is only an illusory appearance of virtue…. (69a–b, passim; tr. Grube)

Socrates goes on to point out that this illusory appearance of virtue is suited only to slaves, and that “wisdom itself is a kind of cleansing or purification” (69c). What exactly is wisdom a purification of? The context makes it clear that it, along with other virtues, affords a kind of truth, hence presumably purifying the soul of illusions of something, namely a particular sort of pleasure, as having a value that in fact it does not.

The *Phaedo* passage is rather sketchy and does not supply details about how wisdom or other virtues purify illusions to offer the soul truth. We can find more

[7] See Richardson (1990, n. 47) for several references to measurement in other dialogues, including *Republic* 7.522c, *Statesman* 285a, and *Philebus* 55d–e. Richardson cites a comparison passage in *Philebus* that lists examples of the art of measurement for the *technê* of building.

detail on this in the *Republic*, where at 522c Socrates points out that every science and craft must have a share in one thing, namely, number and calculation. Plato describes the work of the rational part of the soul as calculating or measuring (Rep. 602e1–2). And this part is set against another part of the soul whereby we are subject to various visual illusions like that of the stick in water that looks bent. Socrates says:

> Something looked at from close at hand doesn't seem to be the same size as it does when it is looked at from a distance…. And something looks crooked when seen in water and straight when seen out of it, while something else looks both concave and convex because our eyes are deceived by its colors, and every other similar sort of confusion is clearly present in our soul… And don't measuring, counting, and weighing give us most welcome assistance in these cases, so that we aren't ruled by something's looking bigger, smaller, ore numerous, or heavier, but by calculation, measurement, or weighing? (*Rep.* 602c–d passim, tr. Grube/Reeve)

This passage represents an important step in the *Republic*'s argument for the existence of diverse parts of the soul.[8] These parts explain our vulnerability to what might be called pleasure illusions just along the same line as visual illusions. Thus, if a situation of *akrasia* threatens to occur, in the *Republic* Plato explains this as a matter of distinct parts of the soul entertaining different opinions (*Rep*. 602e1–603a8). Consider an example where, for instance, appetite says that a piece of chocolate cake is very pleasant to eat. Reason will intervene to counter this appearance. Reason might "save us" from the mistake of choosing to eat the cake by presenting it to us under different aspects—as something full of processed flour, sugar, and fat. Notice that in such a case we do not need a direct hedonic comparison but rather just the counter-appearance that corrects the initial deceptive appearance of pure and simple deliciousness. We could even say in this way that reason is more effective at combating pleasure-illusions than at counteracting visual illusions. Further on in Republic X, of course, Plato adds that reason can also enable us to correct the mistaken impressions or opinions gleaned from tragedy, which is full of images appealing to the appetitive soul.[9]

My third and last example of another work's allusion to a kind of science of measurement as the means of addressing pleasure illusions involves several passages from the *Philebus.* Near the end of the dialogue, during the final summation by Protarchus and Socrates of their discussion, the two men conclude that the best life involves some kind of mixture of pleasure and intellect. To describe what will contribute to this best mixture is a matter of weighing and measuring things correctly: "For measure and proportion manifest themselves in all areas as beauty and virtue" (64e). To design the best life, then, one must know what sort of knowledge is valuable and why, as well as what sorts of pleasures should be allowed into the mix. This sounds very much like a case of applying a sophisticated science of measurement. But it is not a simple or reductive hedonic calculus. Let me explain

[8] Some scholars read the conflict of opinions in Book 10 as a conflict within reason and not between reason and appetite or spirit, e.g. Nehamas (1999, 264–266), and also Reeve (2010, 214 and note 6).

[9] See Moss (2012).

why not. In the *Philebus*, pleasure is considered essential to a good human life, but it is assessed and allowed entry based upon qualitative and not simply quantitative factors. Indeed, among the various types of pleasures that should *not* be considered are those that are the most intense or "biggest." Neither should pleasures be included if they are false. These fall into various types, of which several are flawed by some aspect of illusion. False pleasures of judgment involve the soul taking pleasure in something that is false or does not exist, whereas false pleasures of size illusion (my label) occur in the opposite way and resemble the illusory pleasures that the akratic falls prey to in the *Protagoras*.[10]

> But now it applies to pleasures and pains themselves; it is because they are alternately looked at from close up or far away, or simultaneously put side by side, that the pleasures seem greater compared to pain and more intensive, and pains seem, on the contrary, moderate in comparison to pleasures.

It is quite inevitable that such conditions arise under these circumstances.

> But if you take that portion of them by which they appear greater or smaller than they really are, and cut it off from each of them as a mere appearance and without real being, you will neither admit that this appearance is right nor dare to say that anything connected with this distortion of pleasure or pain is right and true. (*Philebus* 42a7–c3, tr. D. Frede)

Here again, as with passages from the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, we see that some sort of art of measurement provides us with the means of counteracting deceptive pleasure appearances so as to recognize them as such, allowing us to pursue a better and more virtuous life, one that is tempered by wisdom.

Conclusion

I began this paper by reviewing Lavery's typology of scholarly approaches to the *Protagoras*, indicating that my method would involve pursuing a pervasive theme of the dialogue, one involving the idea of measuring and assessing, as background for analyzing a central disputed passage about hedonism and the art of measurement. I have argued that the argument does reinforce the value of an art of measurement, but that it does not presuppose hedonism, particularly of a crude quantitative sort. Expanding upon Lavery's typology so as to include an inter-dialogic approach, I showed that the idea of measuring and comparing goods and, in particular, of using reason to combat perceptual illusions about which things are truly good, is a common one that is presented in other Platonic dialogues, notably the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Philebus*. My interpretation is roughly along the lines of Henry Richardson's, in that it challenges the often-held claim that Socrates in the *Protagoras* is committed to hedonism, while at the same time accepting the need for some *technê*, an art or

[10] See Freeland (2008).

science of measurement, enabling us to weigh various values and choose among them by rejecting the ones comprised of deceptive elements.

Afterword on *Technê* and an Objection from Gonzalez

Francisco Gonzalez (2014) has argued that Socrates would never agree to saying that virtue is or requires a *technê*. On Gonzalez's view, in *Protagoras*, Plato argues that virtue for a human being is inquiring into the good life every day. Hence it is a practice and is erotic, among other things; but it is not and should not be identified as a *technê*—"not a definable and teachable skill…" (34). Gonzalez writes further,

> Insofar as Socrates elsewhere ever claims to have a *technê* it is *erotikê technê*. (Phaedrus 257a), … this Socratic skill of measuring is *erotic*: it is not the calculation of an already defined good that brings us into its possession and thus saves our lives, but a skill of pursuing the good, a knowledge of how to desire that is also a desire of knowledge. (Gonzalez 2014, 60)

It is Protagoras and not Socrates who would say that there is a *technê* of or for virtue; this is "because he views discussion as a mere means of beating one's opponent in the competition for goods such as prestige and influence (335a3–6). In other words, Protagoras has a purely instrumental and competitive conception of knowledge…How the pretension of a science of measuring pleasure suits such an outlook should be clear" (Gonzalez, 2014, 53).

Gonzalez seems to have a strong animus against the whole idea of virtue as *technê*. He appears to view some scholars' tendency to interpret Socrates as somehow sympathetic to the idea as reflecting the ills of present-day society, and approvingly cites something Coby has said on this:

> It could be observed that the solution proposed by Socrates has in large measure been adopted by modern Western society: a utilitarian science that enlightens and satisfies the desires of the masses; a society that is technological, progressive, secular, hedonistic, permissive, apolitical, egalitarian, and individualistic—all attributes of the art of measurement. (Cobi 1987, 171)

While I acknowledge that the notion of some modern day technology of pleasure sounds potentially sinister, with bizarre hints of a Foucauldian scheme of disciplinary control, I do not believe we have to saddle Socrates with these modern associations. My inclination to be more favorable to the idea of a measurement science does not stem from any faith in a more warm and fuzzy version of the hedonic calculus. I simply do think that Socrates or Plato owe us some accounting of how comparative judgments of value are to be made. I take it that this is just what Socrates was looking for in dialogues like the *Euthyphro* where he pursued definitions in order to have a paradigm to look to for assessing his own or other people's actions, and what Plato may have thought he had found and shared with his readers in works like the *Republic*.

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Turning Towards Philosophy: A Reading of *Protagoras* 309a1–314e2

Gro Rørstadbotten

Ever since the days of Homer, Greek teachers had been trying to make their students "speakers of words and doers of deeds" (cf. *Iliad* 9, 443). The great Athenian statesman Pericles is said to have been a student of Protagoras and especially due to Thucydides' description of him as a man "most able in speech and action" (Thucydides 1. 139,4.), Pericles stands as a historically excellent example on Protagoras' abilities as teacher. Protagoras himself praises Pericles when describing how he, despite the deaths of his sons through the plague, still managed to "appear dry-eyed before the assembly and give a speech; this is maybe a confirmation on Protagoras' admiration of "the 'nobility of spirit' which he saw emerged in this great statesman".[1] But it is not only as a great teacher Protagoras earned his fame. According to K. J. Dover (1972) Protagoras was also involved in the founding of the colony at Thurii; allegedly on Pericles' request, and on recommendation from the oracle of Delphi, Protagoras took on the obligation for planning the program of education, and stood forth as the colony's lawgiver. In addition, he was a writer who composed famous pieces such as the "man-measure doctrine": "Man is the measure of all things, of those that are, that (*or* how) they are, of those that are not, that (*or* how) they are not."[2] That this form of writing – a bold statement of general truths, ambiguous and unsupported by discussion – struck someone as being reminiscent

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[1] O'Sullivan (1995, 31); his commentary to Protagoras' fragment B9.

[2] Protagoras, fragment B1. Quoted in O'Sullivan (1995, 18).

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of the oracular, is shown in the *Theaetetus* through Socrates' reference to fragment B1. Socrates says it is uttered "from the inner sanctum of his book".[3] This Socratic expression purposefully recalls the practice of Delphi, and maybe it was the law-giver of Thurii – who wrote in such a style – that Socrates, displayed as a sophist in Aristophanes' comedy the *Clouds*, referred to as "the Thurian seer/prophet (Θουριομάντεις)" (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 331).

Towards the end of the *Protagoras*, the "Thurian seer" himself presents a sort of prophesy when he states: "I certainly say that I wouldn't be surprised if you [i.e. Socrates] should get to be one of the men notable for wisdom" (361e4–5). This prophesy is somehow confirmed by Socrates in the *Apology* (21a,) but in the context of the *Apology* Socrates makes a direct reference to the oracle of Delphi who once told his friend Chaerephon that Socrates was the wisest man of all. Hence, through their undertakings as "speakers of words and doers of deeds" both Protagoras and Socrates have connections to the oracle of Delphi: First, due to Protagoras' wisdom the oracle *recommended* him for the pioneering enterprise in Thurii, and secondly, the oracle *defined* Socrates as the wisest man of all. Then again, as his name implies, Protagoras was, the first to the agora, thus, when Socrates enters the stage with his new ideas towards education, Protagoras was already set and famous for his ideas which he once had managed to establish. So, when the two oracular teachers meet in the *Protagoras*, I take the overall theme of the dialogue being an encounter between old versus new ideas: a battle of ideas concerning education, or *paideia*. From this perspective I will suggest that through the opening scenes of the *Protagoras* – the prelude and the Hippocrates section – the readers witness the emergence, or awakening, of the philosophical pedagogue and in addition, a young man's turn towards philosophy.

The Argument of the Paper

When developing my argument, I follow Drew Hyland in his reflections on the significance of place and dramatic date in the Platonic dialogues. He argues the Platonic writings "exhibits the conviction that the place of a dialogue is nothing incidental to the content or character of the discussion that take place" and, further that "the dramatic date of various dialogues should be significant in our interpretations" (Hyland 1994, 30). So, what about the place and the dramatic date of the *Protagoras*? Contrary to quite a few of the dialogues in the corpus,[4] the explicit place in prelude of the *Protagoras* is concealed, and in addition the friends who Socrates encounters

[3] *Theaetetus* 162a; cf. O'Sullivan (1995, 18).

[4] The preludes in most of the dialogues are equipped with information concerning the dramatic setting (place and dramatic date); the amount of information varies – but the general "rule" is that we are given just enough to decide the place. For example: the *Parmenides* gives an overloading amount of information regarding the place, whilst the *Charmides* gives much less – but sufficient.

are anonymous. Bearing Hyland's emphasizing of the significance of the place in mind, how is this concealment to be interpreted? Due to the concealment of both place and interlocutor, the only foundation for an interpretation is the words uttered. Hence, I suggest that the words exchanged in the prelude give some significant hints towards Socrates' state of mind at this point. By assuming that the dramatic date of the *Protagoras* is 432,[5] this is arguably philosophy's first appearance in the distinctive form of the *Socratic activity* or *Socratic questioning*. The simple line of questioning advocated by Socrates towards Hippocrates will show itself to be effective, and exposes that the burden of learning rests with the student *as* learner rather than with the teacher *as* inculcator. I think this exposure simultaneously suggests that the learnable is not necessarily teachable.[6] This is an insight which I suggest this dialogue as a whole aims at showing its readers. By limiting the extent of this paper to the opening scenes of the dialogue, I suggest that these sections uncover three things: First, the ambiguous prelude can be taken as a clue towards an extraordinary happening already taken place. Secondly, in the Hippocrates section the readers witness Socrates' awakening and him becoming a philosophic pedagogue. The term "pedagogue" means "to lead the child/youth"; thereby a "philosophical pedagogue" denotes the one who knows how to lead a youth to philosophy, and who is able to employ techniques or methods for doing so. Hence, the Socratic awakening in the Hippocrates section is related to the birth of the Socratic activity. His turning *into* philosophy happens throughout the dialogue and is realized in its last scene; this realization will be commented on in the conclusion of my paper. The third element of the Hippocrates section is Hippocrates' turning *towards* philosophy. But, what does turning *towards* and *into* philosophy denote?

The Turning *Towards* and *Into* Philosophy

In Book 7 of the *Republic*, Socrates tries to convince a rather skeptical Glaucon that it is possible to live a good and rational life if the polis is governed by guardians well educated. So when Socrates sets out to show Glaucon this possibility he asks him: "Do you want us to consider how such people will come to be in our city and

[5] Regarding the Platonic corpus, I establish the dramatic dates of the dialogues as a reading-strategy, and read them chronological accordingly. When setting the dramatic dates, I am indebted to Nails (2002).

[6] The distinction between the "teachable" and the "learnable" is of importance here because the main questions in the dialogue is: "Is virtue teachable?" I take it that if virtue is teachable, then the student can get knowledge of virtue through instructions (only) from a teacher; the teacher is then an inculcator and the knowledge is inculcated in the student; thus, the student being capable of being instructed. If not teachable, virtue can still be learnable. In this case the student takes on the burden as a learner and is gaining knowledge and skill by studying, practicing and experiencing. In this instance the teacher is not an inculcator and the knowledge is not inculcated; instead knowledge is gained by experience through proper guidance. See Kastely (1996) for more profound discussion and outlining on this thematic.

how – just as some are said to have gone up from Hades to the gods – we'll lead them up to the light?" Glaucon wants to partake in this investigation, and Socrates explains: "This isn't, it seems, a matter of tossing a coin, but of turning (περιαγωγή) a soul from a day that is a kind of night to the true day – the ascent to what is, which we say is true philosophy (φιλοσοφίαν ἀληθῆ)."[7] Socrates further clarifies that the turning of the soul *towards* philosophy is the start of a process where proper studying, training and guidance is imperative. The point of the turn signals a transformation and we are told in that from this point forth, the student pushes himself and urges his teacher until he has reached the end of the journey, or has become capable of doing philosophy without a guide and finding the way of himself (*Seventh Letter* 340c). The turn is also a theme of importance when we meet the young Socrates in the *Parmenides*, Parmenides asks him:

> So what are you going to do about philosophy? Where are you going to turn (τρέψις), given your ignorance of these things?
> Socrates: "I don't think I can altogether see, not at the moment."
> Parmenides: "That, Socrates, is because you are trying to define beautiful and just and good and each of the forms prematurely, before being properly trained." (*Parmenides* 135c)

It looks like Socrates took the words from the mature Parmenides into consideration, because 18 dramatic years later, in the *Protagoras* when discussing the teachings of the sophists with Hippocrates, he says: "Let's consider these things with our elders too, since we are still too *young* to be making a decision on so great a matter" (314b4–6). Supposedly, Socrates has trained for many years, and at the outset of the *Protagoras* he reflects himself *still* too young for being a proper guidance for Hippocrates. Thus, I suggest that Socrates at this point still considers himself to be a trainee; but during the drama evolving in the *Protagoras* – this changes and the alteration on behalf of Socrates can be detected through three steps: First, his state of mind signaled in the prelude; secondly, his awakening in the "bedroom scene"; thirdly, his final turning *into* philosophy which is something that happens suddenly: "Suddenly (ἐξαίφνης), like a light flashing forth when a fire is kindled; it is born in the soul which straight away is nourished by itself" (cf. *Seventh Letter* 341c). This element of suddenness (ἐξαίφνης) will be a returning theme of the paper, but so far I suggest that Socrates' turning can be seen through the "great *aporia*" in the last scene of the dialogue; and Hippocrates' turning through the "small *aporia*" in the "courtyard scene". So, let us now enter the dialogue and start the reading of the opening-scenes of the *Protagoras*.

[7] Both quotes are from *Republic* 521c.

The Prelude (309a1–310a7)

The *Protagoras* is bracketed by the movements "arriving" and "leaving". The last word of the dialogue is ἀπῆμεν; which literary means "we went away *or* we departed"; the first word is πόθεν[8]; which literary means "from where?" So, already through the first word uttered, the readers understand that Socrates has been somewhere; he left something behind and arrived at quite another place. Through the last word it is stated that Socrates left; but where did he go?[9] One answer can be given if the readers turn to the first page and start reading the dialogue all over again: then we learn, once again, that Socrates is arriving somewhere, at a place not named. These movements make the *Protagoras* kind of a circular dialogue, a kind of closed universe.

This movement-theme is traceable in the prelude where the opening-line is constructed as a question put forth by Socrates' anonymous friend, who is gathered with someone, somewhere: "From where, Socrates, are you appearing (πόθεν, ὦΣώκρατες, φαίνει?" (309a1), he asks. The friend answers the question himself: "No, don't tell me. It's pretty obvious that you have been hunting the ripe and ready Alcibiades" (309a1–2). From the friend's two utterances we can detect at least three things: First, the friend has observed something, sometime, which at this point gives him reason to conclude that Socrates is hunting Alcibiades for sexual pursuit,[10] or he is hinting towards Socrates' reputation of pursuing young boys in this manner. I think the last suggestion is the case, and hence, this rumor can – at a general level – be interpreted as a "Socratic *topos*" (commonplace).[11] Secondly, the friend's attitude signals he is convinced that when Socrates is approaching a young man, it is with seductress intents; an attitude which in turn suggests – at a personal level – a validation of the "Socratic *topos*". Thirdly, the friend is hunting for gossip, or at this point – news with a sort of spicy content; which can be taken as a third hint towards the "Socratic *topos*". But Socrates is not quite willing to enter this hunting-Alcibiades-discourse; however he admits coming from Alcibiades right now and states that "I want to tell you something really strange (ἄτοπον) though: even with him present, I paid no attention to him and often forgot that he was there" (309b7–9). Due to the phrase "something really strange" which translates the term

[8] This is an interrog. adv. *whence*? (1) of place: who, from what, from where? (2) of origin: from what source? (3) of the cause, whence? From where? The Greek text used in this paper is from *Platon. Werke in acht Bänden* (1990).

[9] The last utterance of the dialogue says: "we went away…"; who Socrates left with has been a theme of long lasting speculations and will not be touched upon here. It is for certain that Socrates did not leave alone, and thus, it also for certain that he left.

[10] "Socrates was hunting Alcibiades for sexual pursuit", is due to the hunting metaphor *κυνηγεσίου* (309a2). Cf. Denyer (2008, 65).

[11] Eide (1996, 60) defines "*topos*" (pl. *topoi*) "as being the mathematical concept of 'geometrical locus'". As a rhetorical concept "*topos*" denotes the place where the orator finds specific types of arguments or patterns of argumentation (i.e. "commonplace"); "*topos*" can also denote the arguments themselves, cf. Eide (1990, 115).

"ἄτοπον",[12] it looks like Socrates himself – implicitly – is confirming the existence of a rumor, or a "Socratic *topos*", regarding Alcibiades, or other youths. The terms "*topos*", understood as "commonplace", and "*atopos*", understood as "illogical", signal a contradiction, and thus creates a tension regarding Socrates' state of mind at this point. The friend is surprised: "Surely you didn't meet up with someone else more beautiful, not in this city anyway" (309c2–3). Socrates now holds that the wisest thing appears more beautiful than Alcibiades, and then discloses that he has just met Protagoras. When hearing that Protagoras is in town, the friend attitude changes: he is now eager to learn what went on in this meeting; whereupon Socrates replies: "I'd count it as a favor (χάριν) if you'd listen" (310a5). Coming from Socrates as we know him, these statements are somewhat rare – and as such – they may present an affirmative hint towards Socrates' mood in the prelude. It is of importance to bear in mind that the prelude is presented as a postscript regarding Socrates' encounter with Protagoras. It seems like Socrates to some extent is upset, and thus, has a need to tell someone about what caused the distress; this – in turn – points towards a general human need to share with others when having experienced something extraordinary.

But, what is this extraordinary or this "something really strange (ἄτοπον)" that happened? I think the "really strange" is the first clue enabling the readers to expose Socrates' awakening and turning; a new insight which is exposed to the readers through the displacement of the Eros of Socrates: the Socratic Eros is displaced *from* Alcibiades (cf. the Socratic *topos*) *to* the love of wisdom, *and* in addition, the implicit claim that Hippocrates was the first cause of the displacement; Protagoras was the second. A second clue we find at the end of the dialogue. Things are now so confused and displaced that both Socrates and Protagoras apparently have changed their respective positions without being aware of it – their authority is not confirmed but rather put into question. The confusion detectable towards the end makes James L. Kastely state that "this is one of the few dialogues in which I am not sure that Socrates is always in control of himself" (Kastely 1996, 36). I agree with Kastely, but I think that "the Socrates out of control" at the end, indicates that at this point, he himself understood the awakening and the turning in the fullest extent: he was "mystified by himself" because he found himself insensible to physical beauty and under the attraction of his new Eros, philosophy.[13] This insight perplexed him. In order to elaborate on the first step of this process, we need to do a close-reading of the Hippocrates section.

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[12] Eide (1996, 59–60) argues that "ἀτοπία is the quality of being ἄτοπος, a favourite adjective in Plato, around 230 instances (including the adverb ἀτόπως) being found in his work" and further that *atopos* "had its origin in Greek science 'contrary to τόπος' (τόπος being the mathematical concept of 'geometrical *topos*'), thus "illogical", "inconsistent", "contradictory", and that this sense should be given to the word". On the "*atopon*-theme", see also Vigdis Songe-Møller's article "Socrates' Irony: a Voice From Nowhere" in this volume.

[13] With quite a different outcome, this point is also touched upon by Kastely (1996, 32). Further, in the *Republic* we are told that a man experiencing the shift is from light to darkness or from darkness to light, can appear most ridiculous (517d–518a).

The Hippocrates Section (310a8–314e2)

The Hippocrates section is not well recognized in the literature on the *Protagoras*.[14] According to Michael Gagarin the dialogue's opening-scenes are serving only as literary devices in order to bring Socrates and Protagoras together (Gagarin 1969, 135). C.C.W. Taylor recognizes the Hippocrates section, but only to analyze the questions Socrates asks (Taylor (1976, 64–8); as do John Beversluis but his agenda is to defend Hippocrates' answers against the questions which he argues is designed to silence rather than persuade Hippocrates on the merits (Beversluis 2000, 245–56). In addition, Charles L. Griswold Jr. claims the Hippocrates section to be a "classic and successful little example of Socratic dialogue" (Griswold Jr. 1999, 283). Shannon Dubose claims that the *Protagoras* is a dialogue with no serious philosophical intention (Dubose 1973, 15–21), and in accordance with H.D.F. Kitto (1966, 284) she argues that it is a work in need of revision, for example to reintroduce Hippocrates at the end of the dialogue, whom Plato apparently forgets along the way. Plato's forgetting of Hippocrates is mentioned by Eugenio Benitez in relation to Socrates' first elenchus on Protagoras (Benitez 1992, 231), and is also pointed out by Marina McCoy in relation to the discussion evolving around the poem of Simonides (McCoy 1999). John S. Treantafelles examines the Hippocrates section in order to understand the activity of philosophy from the perspective of "Socratic testing" (Treantafelles 2013). I find parts of Treantafelles' paper very inspirational due to his elaboration of details, but contrary to him I develop my reading of this section from the perspective of Socrates' awakening and Hippocrates turning as suggested above.

The Character Hippocrates

Hippocrates is largely unknown as a historical figure, but Debra Nails argues that there is evidence to suggest that he was a nephew to Pericles (Nails 2002, 160–70), and beside this interesting piece of information we get to know Hippocrates quite well during this section: he is very enthusiastic, has a fighting spirit, he is bold, he knows and trusts Socrates, he knows that Socrates has met Protagoras on an earlier occasion, and thus he begs Socrates to help him getting introduced; Hippocrates thinks that Protagoras is the wisest man in the Greek speaking world, and hence possesses a long-lasting dream: he wants to study with Protagoras, the famous teacher. He developed his dream based on what he heard from people in the city and through these stories he has made up his mind regarding Protagoras and his wisdom. He is so eager to fulfill the dream that he is prepared to bankrupt both himself and his friends. When his brother, at supper one night, tells him that Protagoras is in town it instantly dawns on Hippocrates that this is the opportunity to get the dream

[14] Cf. Treantafelles (2013, 149–50, especially note 1).

realized. He thereupon experiences an almost sleepless night, and supposedly long before daybreak he has made his decision. He then rushes into the dark night with the intention to find his friend Socrates whom he now really needs to talk to.

The Bedroom Scene (310a8–7)

The first specified place in the *Protagoras* is the bedroom-scene of the Hippocrates section. Hippocrates stands forth as noisy, loud and very eager. During this scene Socrates calms him down, and towards the end Hippocrates is noiseless; hence, it seems like he has gained self-control. So, what happened here?

Very early, before daylight, Socrates hears shouting and heavy banging on the door. In the dark he recognizes the yelling voice of Hippocrates: "Socrates, are you awake or asleep?" (310b3–4); the piercing Hippocrates stumbles into a dark room, tumbles towards a bed and places himself by Socrates' feet – but why the underlining of the noise and shouting? From Hippocrates' perspective the answer is given when we are told that he roared: "Have you heard? Protagoras has arrived!" (310b7–8). But what can be said from Socrates' perspective regarding this scene? Treantafelles points out that almost without exception it is assumed that Socrates is (1) at home, and (2) that he is asleep,[15] but according to him there is no textual evidence to support these assumptions. Is Socrates at home, really? In the voice of the narrator, Socrates reports himself, that someone opened the door for Hippocrates (310b2). Who is this someone? According to Nicholas Denyer, in this context, someone (τίς) probably refers to a slave (Denyer 2008, 68). But is there any evidence to suggest that Socrates had a full household; that is family and slaves? I think not. So, what about the sleeping Socrates? Hippocrates found him on a simple bed,[16] but was he asleep? Surely, Socrates is somewhere, but it is not for certain that he is at home, and it is not for certain that he is asleep. I suggest that this is a clue regarding Socrates' awakening, and hence, the *bedroom scene* can be viewed as allegory related to the cave-dwellers in the *Republic*.[17] How? The development here is similar to that of the cave-parable: action was initiated by an instance of suddenness (ἐξαίφνης).[18] We are *not* told explicitly what exactly frees the prisoners in the cave from the passive gazing on the drifting shadows in front of them; we are just told that something "suddenly" happens: "One was compelled to stand up suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) and turn his head around and walk and to lift up his eyes to the light"

[15] Treantafelles (2013, 158). See for example Zuckert (2009, 218) and Beversluis (2000, 246) who both places Socrates at home as well as asleep, and they put forth the assumption that "at home" mean communal living, cf. also Coby (1988, 26). However, there is not textual evidence to support such living arrangements for Socrates; cf. Treantafelles (2013, 158, note 26).

[16] This bed is a (σκίμποδος) which denotes a cheap and low bed, light enough to be used as a stretcher for invalids. Cf. Denyer (2008, 69).

[17] See the opening-section of Book VII (cave-parable) in the *Republic*.

[18] *Republic* 515c7, 516a4 and 516e5; cf. Wyller (1984, 49).

(*Republic* 515c). From this perspective I suggest that Socrates, in the *bedroom scene*, also is dwelling, somewhere in the dark, and by Hippocrates' entrance he is suddenly forced to wake up and start his ascend towards "the light of the veritable day".[19]

Now, the very loud and eager Hippocrates wants them to leave immediately because he is afraid to miss out on Protagoras. But Socrates is holding back: "Let's not go there just yet. It's too early (πρῲι γάρ ἐστιν, 311a3)", he says. The obvious reference here is to the early hour of the day, but this phrase may also suggest that any meeting with Protagoras would be intellectually premature regarding Hippocrates' current state.[20] So, trying to calm him down, Socrates propose a suggestion: "Why don't we go out here into the courtyard and stroll around until its light? Then we can go" (311a5).

The Courtyard Scene (311a8–314c2)

Socrates drags Hippocrates out into the courtyard. This is the second place explicitly named in the Hippocrates section. At this point Socrates employs two proceedings in order to make Hippocrates realize that he has made up his mind through doxa, and hence, he does not understand the danger he is in.

Here, outside, in the hour when night becomes day Socrates decides to see what Hippocrates is made of (311b1–2). Thus he sets out to "test" Hippocrates in order to see if he is able to "scope it out". The term "test" translates the verb ἀποπειράζω which points towards an athletic context, meaning to evoke a wrestler by tentatively "trying" his opponent in a competition; the phrase "scope it out" translates the verb διασκοπέω which literary means to "look at thoroughly". So, Socrates – it seems – is preparing Hippocrates for entering a kind of "wrestling-game"; thus it is imperative that he is able to pay close attention to the opponent's alleged set of trickeries.[21] It is obvious that Socrates considers Protagoras to be Hippocrates' opponent in an upcoming wrestling-game, and through the tests he is about to perform on Hippocrates, we witness the birth of the Socratic activity/questioning. The aim of the result is to prepare Hippocrates for the encounter with the great sophist. Socrates starts the preparation by employing two different (well known) proceedings. The first proceeding is performed by asking simple questions which aim towards a rather simple form of inductive reasoning (elenchus):

(a) Socrates: "[…] you're making an effort now to go to Protagoras and pay him money as a fee on your own behalf; what's your idea? Who will you be going to and what will you become? […] Tell me, if you're going to pay Hippocrates from Cos, and someone asked you this, what would you answer?"

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[19] Cf. *Republic*, 521c, and note 8 above.

[20] Cf. Denyer (2008, 71).

[21] I am indebted to Professor Hayden Ausland for making me aware of the debt of meaning in these two verbs.

Hippocrates: "He is a doctor, and I'll become a doctor".

(b) Socrates: "But if you were intending to go to Polycleitus the Argive or Pheidias the Athenian to pay them on your behalf, what would your answer be then?"
Hippocrates: "I'd say because they're sculptors, I'll become a sculptor".

(c) Socrates: "[…] What other name do we hear spoken about Protagoras, the same way 'sculptor' is about Pheidias and 'poet' about Homer – what do we hear like about Protagoras?"
Hippocrates: "Well, Socrates, what people say, anyway, is that the man is a sophist."
Socrates: "Then you're going to Protagoras, what will you become?"
Hippocrates: "If it's anything like the previous cases, it's obvious so I'll become a sophist" (311b–312a).

The elenchus turned out to be effective because it made Hippocrates able to distinguish between different arts; and in addition he became aware of one simple fact: by seeking the teachings belonging to one particular art, you will become an expert within the field belonging to the art in question. So he now understands that by paying Protagoras for studying with him, he himself will eventually become a sophist. Socrates' response to Hippocrates' last answer is to swear by all the gods before asking: "What? You? Wouldn't you be ashamed to present yourself to the Greek world as a sophist?" (312a5–7). Hippocrates admits he would. At this point we are told that as "he spoke, he was turning red – for a bit of day was just breaking, so he became clearly visible" (312a2–4). Hippocrates' blushing did not occur when he understood he would become a sophist, *but* by the thought of presenting himself as a sophist to the Greek world. This is noteworthy because here the physical dawn of the day coincides – both in time and color – with Hippocrates' blushing, and thus, it can indicate that something is also starting to dawn upon him, intellectually (cf. Denyer 2008, 74). Or, put another way – he finds himself in an *aporetic* situation; and he appreciates it.

But through his questioning, Socrates also did something else: when he enumerated the artisans to identify their abilities for Hippocrates, he started with the doctor at step (a), at step (b) the doctor is excluded and replaced by the sculptor. At step (c) Protagoras is grouped with the poet and sculptor – that is within the imitative arts, thus Socrates performs a little twist[22]; but did Hippocrates notice this? Apparently not, because the result of this questing turns out to be just a preliminary step and by no means satisfactory: consequently, at this point Hippocrates failed to "scope it out". Socrates now claims that Hippocrates does not understand what he is about to do: he is about to expose his soul to something he does not understand. So Socrates starts anew:

Socrates: "[…] What do you consider the sophist to be?"
Hippocrates: "I'd say he's just what the name says; someone who know wise things." (312c5–7)

[22] This "little twist" alludes to the *Republic* 595a–601a, where Socrates also assigned sophistry to the imitative arts, arguably far away from the truth. The connection between the imitative arts and sophistry is also repeatedly established by the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist*.

At this point Hippocrates performs a fallacy by deriving a person's capacity, ability or skill from the name. Maybe this is the reason why Socrates now chooses to employ the second proceeding, or a "method" I am calling to create "imaginary interlocutors". It goes like this: what if someone asked us, what would we answer? I would probably say […], what would you say?

> Socrates: You could say the same thing about the painters […] that they understand the wise things. But if someone asked us 'wise in what respect', we would probably answer 'wise as far as making images' […] so what about the sophist – what would we answer? […]
> Hippocrates: The sophist is wise concerning good speakers. […]
> Socrates: True answer, but not sufficient. On what subjects does the sophist make you a clever speaker?
> Hippocrates: I don't know. […]
> Socrates: Are you aware of the danger you are about to put your soul in?
> Hippocrates: I don't know. (312b–313c)

The use of "imaginary interlocutors" obviously has a didactical impact: through this line of questioning Hippocrates shows himself able to reveal his own ignorance, and becoming aware of what he does not understand – yet. We have so far witnessed that the *Socratic activity/questioning* is effective: in the mode of a sophist, Socrates posed questions which made Hippocrates blush; he virtually started to acknowledge the shame rising from the instantaneous moment one starts to grasp that the opinion first stated was wrong; thus Hippocrates realized the emerging *aporia*; and when he appreciated the *aporetic* condition, Socrates redirected his ambition away from the dream-career in sophistry through a set of questions which enabled Hippocrates to reveal his own ignorance. This is an important revision of his earlier statement where he claimed that the sophist Protagoras was the most "clever speaker" and most skilled in wise things. It is noteworthy that at this moment Socrates decides to meet Hippocrates' initial request, but before they set out, he gives some last warnings concerning the sophist:

> He [the sophist] is a kind of merchant who peddles provisions upon the teachings which nourish the soul, and thus the sophist can deceive us. […] So, if you are knowledgeable (ἐπιστήμων), you can buy teachings (μαθήματα) safely from Protagoras or anyone else. But if you're not; please don't risk what is most dear to you on a roll of a dice […]. (313a ff.)

So, when being knowledgeable he can buy teachings; then the teachings will not be inculcated in his soul – if not knowledgeable, the teachings will be inculcated. This is the real danger; and as such, the situation calls for yet another form of preparation.

In Front of the Entrance to Callias' House (314c3–8)

The area outside Callias' house is the third specified place in this section, and here Socrates employs his third and last proceeding. When arriving at the door of Callias' house, they do not enter, but stay outside for a while, engaged in a "dialectical

conversation" (διελεγόμεθα).[23] We are not told what this conversation is all about, what they actually discussed or how the conversation developed; but it must have been something important because they did not want to leave the subject unsettled before entering the house. Hence, the content of the conversation is concealed for the readers, so the important element here is the narrator (Socrates) explicitly states that the conversation was "dialectic". In this context that is a piece of important information: In the *Republic* Socrates explains to Glaucon that "dialectic is the only inquiry that travels this road [...] and when the eye of the soul[24] is really buried in a sort of barbaric bog, dialectic gently pulls it out and leads it upwards, using the crafts we described to help it and cooperate with it in turning the soul around" (*Republic* 533c–d). If we can assume that Socrates' use of dialectic in the case of Hippocrates is similar to the explanation given to Glaucon, it is possible to conclude that through the three proceedings, the philosophical pedagogue has managed to guide Hippocrates and thus, turned his soul towards philosophy. The closure of the dialectic conversation marks the end of the Hippocrates section.

The Threefold Door Knocking

Through the reading of the Hippocrates section three specific places (the bed-room, the courtyard and the area in front of Callias' house) have been isolated; simultaneously three different ways of the Socratic activity/questioning have been identified. In addition we find that the Hippocrates section is bracketed by door-knocking, a motif Treantafelles among others relates to the genre of comedy.[25] But what will be the result if this door-knocking-motif is viewed from quite a different perspective? I think that this threefold door-knocking can be viewed as symbolizing the threefold way of learning[26]; this way is the guided process leading to do true deeds and

[23] On the term "διελεγόμεθα", see also Benitez (1992) and his discussion on dialectical versus dialogical conversation.

[24] Regarding the "eye of the soul" Socrates says: "It's no easy task – indeed it's very difficult – to realize that in every soul there is an instrument (the eye) that is purified and rekindled by such subjects; it is more important to preserve this than ten thousand eyes, since only with it can the truth be seen" (*Republic* 527d–e).

[25] See Treantafelles (2013, 154) and in addition: note 14 same page.

[26] Generally, the philosophers divided the life of all things into three distinct parts: growth, maturity, and decay, which imply that between the twilight of dawn and the twilight of evening is the high noon of resplendent magnificence, and according to Wyller (1984, 51) Plato often displays a "threefold" (*trehetlig*) development regarding learning. One example is the *Seventh letter* 342a where it is said that "every object has three things which are the necessary means by which knowledge of that object is acquired; and the knowledge itself is a fourth thing; and as a fifth one must postulate the object itself which is cognizable and true.; first of these come the name; secondly the definition; thirdly the image" which in turn leads to the fourth – knowledge. Cf. also the *Laws* 895c, where essence, definition and name are enumerated; cf. also the *Parmenides* 142a.

possessing true beliefs; when this training is done, it will eventually lead to true insight.[27]

When Hippocrates first knocked on the door and entered the dark bedroom, he could be symbolizing the releasing power forcing Socrates suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) to start an ascending from his dwelling in the dark into the light; on behalf of Hippocrates, the consequence of this first knocking was entering a new state: he was transformed *from* being a rather noisy character *to* an individual signaling self-control. Socrates further led him from the dark to the daylight, by enabling him to start the process correcting his own beliefs, thus, Socrates was doing a true deed by turning Hippocrates towards philosophy; hence, Hippocrates experienced a dramatic transformation: by performing a simple inductive reasoning (elenchus) he proceeded from a nescient knower to an embarrassed inept, by taking stand through "imaginary interlocutors" he proceeded from the embarrassed inept to a self-conscious questioner, and through a "dialectical conversation" his soul turned and became strengthened towards the upcoming meeting with the sophistic assembly at the house of Callias. So, when Socrates initially claimed that Hippocrates did not understand what he was about to do, that is, he was about to expose his soul to something he did not understand – maybe this threefold guiding-process can be viewed as a soul-preparation. If so, Hippocrates' soul is no longer in severe danger and the teachings of Protagoras will not be inculcated in it.

When they – together – are doing the second knocking on the door of Callias' house, Hippocrates is supposedly equipped and well-armed. His turning is contrasted by the eunuch doorkeeper who instantly inferred they were sophists due to the dialectic conversation he overheard; hence he slams the door in their faces. His inference was unsound because the premises grounding the inference were unsound; but he could not do otherwise because this kind of conversation had not been overheard before. He was the first, and he did not understand it.[28]

The third knocking is done by Socrates alone, on the door of Callias' house. By just stating that they are not sophists, the eunuch let them enter. No questions asked. I think this third knocking and Socrates' entrance onto the stage overcrowded by sophists, marks Socrates descend – a necessary turmoil in the process leading to his final turning. The gathering in the house of Callias *is* sort of unworldly situation,[29]

[27] Cf. *Republic* 521c, quoted above; cf. note 8; and the *Seventh Letter* 342a.

[28] When reading the dialogues chronologically according to their dramatic dates, it follows that the *Protagoras* is the first *Socratic dialogue*, and consequently – within Plato's dramatic universe – this is the first incident of the *Socratic activity*. So no-one could have overheard such a conversation earlier. It should also be noted that the *Parmenides* is the first dialogue; dramatic date 450. Both the dialectic and the conversations exposed here are different from that of the *Protagoras* because in the *Parmenides* Socrates is a youth (18–20 years old) questioned and guided by Parmenides, the mature philosopher; in the *Protagoras* it is Socrates who questions and guides the young Hippocrates. Thus, the two first dialogues expose two different entrances into philosophy.

[29] I am indebted to Paul Woodruff for making this point concerning the "unworldly situation" in his comment to the paper I presented at the Plato-symposium in Bergen, June 2014. On the entrance to the house of Callias, many have commented on this. See also Vigdis Songe-Møller in this volume, especially note 12.

and as such Socrates' entrance may equalize the descending to Hades which is followed by the ascending to the light, an occurrence Socrates tried to explain to Glaucon in the *Republic*.[30]

Some Concluding Remarks

When three times trying to expose Protagoras to the same procedures which worked towards Hippocrates, Socrates experiences them as not being effective. Why? Maybe because the *Socratic activity* has an aim: that is to lead the student towards philosophy, and through this process the burden of learning rests with the student as learner. Hippocrates, as we have seen, took on that burden, but Protagoras is absolutely not that kind of student; and in addition, during the dialogue he demonstrates that he presents the teacher as inculcator contrary to Socrates who stands forth as a philosophical pedagogue; thus, through the famous *aporia* at the end – Socrates realizes this contrariness, and he instantly knows how and why the learnable is not necessarily teachable – or the abyss between the old and new ideas concerning *paideia*. How did this happen? In the *Protagoras* we witness two productive *aporias*; both signaling a "transition by suddenness". The first is related to the student (Hippocrates), the latter to the teachers: Protagoras versus Socrates, the philosophic pedagogue. The first occurred in the Hippocrates section where Hippocrates, by appreciating his aporetic situation started his turning *towards* philosophy; a turning which exposed that confrontation with one's own beliefs and convictions are the necessary first step; the second *aporia* led Socrates towards his final turning *into* philosophy. Gaining this kind of insight is, according to descriptions given in the *Republic* and the *Seventh Letter*, a perplexing and confusing experience – and I take it that a man in such a state can appear to be comical, out of control, and clowning around[31] – but not for long. The clarity returned when Socrates – in his last reply to Protagoras, invited him to start the discussion all over again, but Protagoras declined. This declination indicates that he did not appreciate his *aporetic* situation, and hence gained no insight from it. So, Socrates left, and maybe he closed the door behind him. For certain he arrived at quite another place where he met someone, gathered somewhere.

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[30] Cf. *Republic*, 521c (cf. note 8 quoted above).

[31] Cf. Kastely (1996) quoted above, cf. note 14 and 15.

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Plato's *Protagoras*, Writing, and the Comedy of Aporia

Marina McCoy

In earlier work, I have argued that myth and poetic interpretation are central to the philosophy in Plato's *Protagoras* (McCoy 1998, 1999). Despite Socrates' caution that poetic interpretation is not as significant as speaking on the behalf of one's own ideas (Griswold 1999), Plato as author speaks through the voices of his characters in the dialogue and not in the voice of simply "Plato". Plato's own writing includes a lengthy myth presented by his character Protagoras.[1] Moreover, Socrates' interpretation of poetry is even longer than the Protagorean myth. His interpretation constitutes the longest speech in the dialogue, even as it follows Socrates' assertion that short question and answer is preferable to long speeches. The inclusion of a wide range of methods of speaking and indeed of thinking, invites us as Plato's audience and interpreters to wonder: where in myth, poetry, and question (as well as argument, assertion, and *aporia*) is philosophy?

In this paper,[2] I will build upon my previous work, which focused more narrowly on specific sections of the dialogue (the myth of Protagoras and the interpretation of the Simonides poem), and argue that the dialogue as a whole also plays off the genre of Greek comedy in its expression of its philosophical meaning (Nightingale 2000).[3]

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[1] While some commentators take this myth to present Protagorean ideas, whether this is the case or not is difficult to know. Regardless, we can safely assume that the myth both represents something of Protagoras' beliefs, at least as Plato understood them, and that the myth as written includes a creative Platonic element in its particular presentation.

[2] This paper was originally presented as part of a longer keynote speech at the Symposium of the Philosophy and Poetry Project at the University of Bergen, Norway, in June 2014. I am grateful to Vigdis Songe-Møller and Knut Ågotnes for their invitation and for the many helpful comments by conference participants. My particular thanks especially go to Olof Pettersson for his comments and feedback on this essay, which is revised from the form of its original presentation.

[3] I am indebted to Andrea Nightingale's work on the relation of Platonic dialogue to earlier Greek genres, including comedy.

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Like much Old Comedy, Platonic comedy has serious purposes. This dialogue at points invites us to re-envision Socrates against the backdrop of Old Comedy and its criticisms of Socrates and the sophists. To be clear, here Plato is not simply taking up Old Comedy and applying it to a new topic; as a number of commentators have argued, Plato develops a new genre in developing the philosophical dialogue (Nightingale 1990; Nussbaum 2001). Still, the Protagoras gains a depth of meaning for us, its audience, when we consider the backdrop of Old Comedy, and both the continuities and discontinuities with Comedy. In re-envisioning the comic, the philosophical comedy of the *Protagoras* also seeks for us, its audience, to re-envision ourselves.

The dialogue begins with a joke about the chase after beauty and wisdom and ends with *aporia*. Philosophy, understood as this chasing of the beautiful, often ends in *aporia*, as evidenced by the many dialogues in which Socrates seeks an answer to the question "what is x?" and finds after lengthy inquiry that he, his interlocutor, or often both are unable to answer the question definitively and find themselves in confusion (e.g. *Euthyphro*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Hippias Major*). The *Protagoras* itself ends in this way, with Socrates and Protagoras having reversed positions and Socrates encouraging further inquiry (*Prot.* 361a–d). The opening frame of the dialogue between Socrates and his friend takes place chronologically after the entire conversation with Protagoras has already taken place. Thus, the beginning of the dialogue circles back around to its conclusion, an end that concludes but without closure. The opening frame can be taken to be Socrates' interpretation in the context of friendship, rather than in the context of *agôn*, to the meaning of that *aporia*. So let us for a moment, like Socrates to his friend, consider the dialogue's end as we begin.

The conversation between Socrates and Protagoras began with the question of whether virtue can be taught, with Protagoras asserting that virtue is teachable, and Socrates doubting, but ends with a reversal of their positions. This reversal takes place only after Socrates has seemingly argued for a kind of hedonism in which pleasure is the good and a calculable good—a view explicitly rejected in other dialogues such as the *Gorgias*. This reversal has perplexed Platonic commentators, who wonder whether hedonism is a Platonic position later rejected as Plato continued to think through what the good is (Grote 1973; Hackforth 1928; Irwin 1977), whether it is an *ad hominem* argument directed at *Protagoras* (Dyson 1976; Hemmenway 1996; McCoy 1998; Russell 2000; Weiss 1990), or whether there is some other strategy at work. But in the midst of our own hermeneutical questions, we cannot forget that Socrates himself experiences *aporia*, but not as mere confusion. As the Platonic audience, we share in Socrates' sense of reversal, much as we might share in the reversals that befall characters of Greek tragedy. However, Plato characterizes this reversal and its *aporia* not as tragic but rather as comic.

The friend asks Socrates why he is late but posits an answer to his own question before Socrates can respond: "No need to ask; you've been chasing around after that handsome young fellow Alcibiades. Certainly when I saw him just recently he struck me as still a fine-looking man, but a man all the same, Socrates (just between ourselves), with his beard already coming" (309a). Socrates admits that he has only

just now left Alcibiades, thus clarifying for us that this conversation takes place immediately after the longer conversation that the Platonic audience is about to hear. To his friend's teasing that Alcibiades is a bit too old to be the beloved, Socrates replies that Homer says this is the most delightful age at which to have one. But there was a greater beauty whom Socrates has discovered, "far finer-looking" than the handsome Alcibiades: Protagoras! Protagoras is finer, because wiser (*Prot*. 309c). Protagoras is a good deal older than Socrates, a point that is emphasized again later in the dialogue when Socrates names him as old and wise (318b) and again when Protagoras chooses the form of *mythos* as the most appropriate form of speech for one who is older to speak to those who are younger (320c). The comedic effect of Socrates preferring the elderly Protagoras to the dashing and handsome Alcibiades ought not to be lost on us: this might be rather like saying that one was distracted from the good looks of Matt Damon or Johnny Depp (or Jennifer Lawrence, if you prefer) by the compelling good looks of Joe Biden or Margaret Thatcher.

This comic opening of the dialogue gives a certain playfulness and lightness to the dialogue that interprets the *aporia* of the dialogue's end through Socrates's own attitude. The dialogue is rife with gaps, places where the argument seems to fall into the cracks, spots where a new start must be made again and again often without strong continuity with what has immediately preceded the restart. Yet for Socrates, *that* the end that concludes without completion, without a clear sense of where a next beginning could be, is not tragic. It is a source of beauty. Protagoras is not the wise man that Socrates playfully makes him out to be, so the sophist's wisdom is not the source of that beauty. Rather, the beauty is found in the *aporia*, in the Socratic wisdom to delve into a problem of what is unknown, to emerge from it still unknowing, and yet with the desire for philosophical conversation rekindled. That rekindling of Socrates' chase for beauty is evidenced by his conversation with the friend, to whom he speaks. Socrates speaks of a conversation that is both wise and aporetic and wise because aporetic: and so he invites his friend also to take an attitude appropriate to such things: listening (310b).

In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates is the first among the sophists, pale faced men who spend all their time in the *phrontistêrion* debating the correct use of words, measuring the size of flea feet with tiny wax slippers, and making the weaker argument the stronger. The *Protagoras* also features a number of sophists engaged in comical action. The dramatic set up is remarkably close to that of the *Clouds*. In the *Clouds*, the play opens with the elderly Strepsiades in agony over the debts that he has incurred as a result of his spendthrift son Pheidippides. In the midst of his complaint, Strepsiades complains that his wife had insisted that their son have some reference to horse or *hippos* in his name to reflect her aristocratic origins. Strepsiades wanted to name his son Phidonnides ("frugal"), and the name on which they settled together, Pheidippides, was a compromise name that combined elements of the terms frugal and horse (Robinson 1912). Strepsiades' name itself means "twisting" or "deceptive," so he shares a certain degree in common with the sophists inside the *phrontistêrion*. The play begins in the dark, as the slave remarks that they have run out of oil for the lamp, and soon after all are awake, Strepsiades sends Pheidippides

off to the sophists. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates is asleep when Hippocrates arrives in the dark to announce that he plans to study with Protagoras. Hippocrates' name contains the term *hippos;* it's a common aristocratic-sounding name. In contrast to Hippocrates' high energy and enthusiasm to spend his money as soon as possible on a Protagorean education, Socrates seeks to reign in the impulses of the young man (Gonzalez 2014). A slave makes a brief appearance in each, either in person or in dialogue. Both prologues concern the question of the education of a young man and whether the sought for education will be beneficial or corrupting, and in what sense "beneficial." We can see that there are many elements of the *Clouds* juxtaposed here, but with significant differences: while both father figures seek to reign in the impulses of the younger, foolish men who wish to spend their family fortunes, Socrates acts for the good of Hippocrates and not for his own good. His own family wealth is not at stake here, indeed we know that he has little of it, but his care for the youth of Athens is apparent.

Structurally, Old Comedy follows the basic formula of: a prologue; *parodos* (song sung by the Chorus as it enters); a dramatic episode; an *agôn*; a *parabasis* that expresses the author's views; another choral song called a *stasimon*; and the exodus with an exit scene to end the play. The *Protagoras* has many elements of this basic structure, though I want to be clear that I am not arguing that Plato is following such a structure with any exactitude. Rather, Platonic dialogue plays off of Greek comedy but interrupts its form with moments of lengthier rational discussion absent in Greek comedy (Capra 2001).[4] The play begins with a prologue, indeed a double prologue, with a conversation between Socrates and his unnamed friend or *hetairos* preceding the telling of the rest of the *Protagoras*, thus making it a narrated dialogue in its entirety (309a–310a). Next comes a dramatic episodes between Socrates and Hippocrates (310a–314c) and then both these men and those in Callias' house (314c–316a). The entrance into Callias's house begins with a long description of the sophists within. But instead of Socrates in a basket trying to get closer to heaven, we have Hippias enthroned, pontificating to those who will listen, Protagoras walking back and forth in the portico, enchanting his students, and Prodicus still in bed (314e–316a).

The discussion of the unity of the virtues and subsequent Socratic question and answer is akin to a comedic *agôn* but with a somewhat less ridiculous tone—even here, though, we find the twisting nature of the argumentation annoys Protagoras and some of the listening audience as well (see, e.g., 335a, 336b, 360d). And while the long presentations of Protagoras in his myth and Socrates in his poetic interpretation are not songs, they are lengthy presentations more like a chorus than like

[4] Capra argues that Plato is not following the conventions of Greek comedy more generally here, but only that more specifically of Aristophanes's *Clouds*. I agree that the *Protagoras* seeks to play off of the *Clouds* in particular, but here we also see in the *Protagoras* play with larger structural features of comedy. The similarity is not only between characters or specific dramatic moments; rather, the larger structure and order of the *Protagoras* has continuities with Comedy, while also deliberately replacing some comical elements with specifically Platonic inventions. (I discovered Capra's work, published solely in Italian, only after presenting this talk at the Bergen conference and thank Hayden Ausland for pointing me to it.)

dramatic action of an *agôn*. Last, we have a formal exodus, when Socrates finishes his narration by saying, "Our conversation was over and so we left" (362a).

A most important difference is the location of Socrates. Socrates is inside the house of the sophists in the *Clouds*, but on the other side of the door from the sophists in the *Protagoras*. In the *Clouds*, Strepsiades knocks on the door of the *phrontistêrion*, and a student within promptly yells at him for upsetting their experiment. The student refuses to open the door for Strepsiades at first; only when Strepsiades insists that he is there to learn from the sophists is he allowed in. Similar actions occur in the *Protagoras*, but with small, significant shifts in action. By locating Socrates outside the door and the sophists within, Plato as author differentiates him from them. Socrates is neither a sophist nor a student of the sophists, but easily confused with one: indeed, when *they* knock, the slave working the front door at Callias' house has had enough with the sophists, remarking "Ha! More sophists! He's busy!" (313d). Socrates' response is that he is not there to see Callias but rather Protagoras, and more importantly for our purposes, he declares, "we are not sophists" (314e). While Socrates may at times come across as even more "twisting" in his argumentation than Strepsiades, and skilled in it than Protagoras, neither his wisdom nor his skill makes him very much like either Strepsiades or the Aristophanic version of Socrates that we find in the *Clouds*. The play with comedy takes Socrates out of the grouping with the sophists and into a spectator of them, along with us.

Socrates as spectator narrates the scene for us in ways that are no less comical than Aristophanes' pictures of sophists with their heads under the earth and behinds studying the skies. Protagoras is walking in the portico, flanked by his star students on either side and followed behind by foreigners who follow him enchanted "with his voice like Orpheus." Here, Plato mixes elements of Comedy with elements of *katabasis* poetry, that is, poetry about the underworld. While Orpheus is not referred to in either Homer or Hesiod, by the early classical period, there are poems that reference Orpheus's ability to lead not only animals but also trees and even rocks with the sound of his voice. For example, Appolonius of Rhodes in his *Argonautica* writes, "But they say that by the sound of his songs he bewitched stubborn rocks and flowing rivers in the mountains. And even now wild oaks, traces of his song, flourish on the Thracian headland at Zone, ranged in rows, closely packed" (1.23–34). Simonides, fragment 62, describes birds fluttering over Orpheus' head, and fish leaping straight out of the water at his "beautiful song" (*kalai sun aodai*). Indeed, Euripides even compares such a capacity to lead as a kind of either wisdom or sophistry depending on how we'd like to translate it: in his *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, Iphigeneia speaks: "If I had the speech of Orpheus, father, so as to persuade by incantation, so that rocks followed me and I bewitched anyone I wished with my words, I would have used it. But as it is, I will provide what *sopha* I have: my tears" (1211–15; trans. Burgess 2014).

If we translate *sopha* as sophistry in order to emphasize these words as means of persuasion, then the picture of Protagoras in Plato as performing a kind of *psychagôgia* upon his followers through speech fits into this larger pattern of presenting Orpheus as one who casts a spell in order to lead. Socrates' narration of Protagoras as Orpheus places Plato within a brief but shared tradition of linking Orpheus to

psychological persuasion. The brilliance of Plato's own use is that he uses the figure of Orpheus not to raise Protagoras up but rather to bring him down. We know not to take Protagoras quite so seriously not only by the location of this description of Protagoras in a dialogue that otherwise presents him as all-too-human and limited in his capacity to offer philosophical argument, but also through Plato's skillful juxtaposition of the image of Orpheus with the image of the Chorus of Comedy. Socrates describes those who follow Protagoras as like a Chorus, and like dancers who turn adeptly when Protagoras reaches the end of the corridor so as never to get in the sophist's way. In offering this picture of Protagoras' followers as something like a Chorus processing from one side of the stage to the other, and then hurriedly having to split in two and circle around to either side of Protagoras so as to maintain order, as if they had run out of enough space on the stage, Plato reminds us that this is all a Protagorean performance.

Plato continues to mix genres in then moving Socrates' narration into the realm of Homeric poetry about the underworld (as Nightingale reminds us, Old Comedy often mixed genres, too). Socrates tells us, "And then I perceived (as Homer says) Hippias of Elis on a high seat in the other end of the colonnade" (305c). Students were seated on benches below, and Hippias answers their questions on astronomy and physics, point by point, from his "high chair" (305c). Next we hear of Prodicus: "I saw Tantalus, too, for Prodicus of Ceos was also in town…Prodicus was still in bed and looked to be bundled up in a pile of sheepskin fleeces and blankets" (305d). The Socratic reference to Homer is more particularly to Odysseus's journey into the underworld, where he sees those who live below the earth as shades forever caught in whatever sorts of lives they had lived during their time on earth. If we want an image of the sophists that tops Aristophanes' picture of pale-skinned, barefoot, unathletic, gaunt intellectuals, we need look no further than Plato, who presents them as *dead*, mere shades groping, like Tantalus, for a wisdom that eludes them. Again, Plato mixes a comedic genre with a more serious form of poetry, with the effect of both heightening the humor in taking such high characters of epic poetry to all time lows: Tantalus is now not a tragic figure who suffers eternally for the outrageous act of serving his own children to the gods, but a teacher who can't get himself awake in time for his 9 o'clock in the morning class and so who makes the students listen to him while he stays in bed. Socrates brings down the sophists through his comparisons of them to figures so epically high as to make the comparison ridiculous.

In this way, Plato as author already lowers his audience's expectations of the sophists in a way that corrects for any intemperate enthusiasm that an auditor may share with Hippocrates. Platonic comedy here educates through showing us what distortions ensue if we look at ordinary human beings through the lens of false heroism. Such a false idealization of others—not only of a sophist like Protagoras but even of Socrates himself—stands as an obstacle to taking responsibility for oneself and one's own views (Griswold 1999). Hippocrates is not to be cured of his enthusiasm only by learning that Protagoras is limited, in order to instead hand over his life savings to someone else—not even Socrates. Instead, the comic portrayal of all within the dialogue emphasizes a shared humanity, one that ought to engender

within each one of us the sort of humility of knowing what one does not know so that one is more able to seek "what is" from the proper point of view, that of incompleteness.

This is not to say that Plato is merely practicing a new form of comedy. A significant difference between Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue is a Platonic preoccupation with *rational disagreement* over the mere presentation of a view.[5] The absence of a Chorus, or any moment that the author steps forward to offer his own view of the matter at hand, deepens the back and forth movement of the argumentation between Protagoras and his views, and the views set forth by Socrates. Instead of *strophê* and *antistrophê*, we listen to *logos* and *antilogos*. Aristophanes himself sets forth an example of the weaker and stronger argument in opposition to one another: in the *Clouds,* the *agôn* has the weaker argument upsets the social order through deceptive argument, while the stronger argument presents ideas that are stuffy, out of step with the times, and incapable of offering a reasoned response to criticism. Both sides to the arguments in the Clouds lack rational *logos* to support them. The Platonic *logos* and *antilogos* shows a limit to reason that is not intended to lead to misology, but instead to a recognition of human limit even as we are compelled to seek the truth more deeply. Even while Socrates finds himself in *aporia*, he (and perhaps his listeners) still learn positively from the discussion. Socratic *aporia* is not reducible to the mere discovery that a particular definition or proposition has failed to capture anything about the topic in question. Far from it! Rather, Socratic *aporia* recognizes an incompleteness or a felt and lived sense of dissatisfaction in the adequacy of discoveries that have been made so far to address all our initial questions.

For example, we might imagine a conversation following the Protagoras between Socrates and another that goes like this: knowledge seems central to each of the virtues, but that when virtue is conceived of only as the calculation of pleasure, certain ordinary moral beliefs about courage are lost, such as the idea that courage can mean accepting pain for oneself for the sake of the good of another. Or one might note that the reduction of courage to a certain recklessness is not sufficient to understand courage, but neither is an all-knowing risk management courage, either. Courage would seem to involve some degree of genuine risk, some knowing but also some not knowing. The *aporia* out of which Socrates and his conversation partner would work is not one that merely recognizes the failure of a previous argument, but rather what those failures teach us about the virtues, even if all of the threads of what has been learned have not yet been woven into a coherent whole. Socrates seems willing to stay with the tangled threads a little longer, while some others might be tempted to throw a seemingly knotted mess away!

Why comedy? As Jeffrey Henderson has argued, the genre of comedy is apropos to Platonic philosophy because Old Comedy itself was already both funny and

[5] Here I depart from Capra, who argues that Socrates descends to the level of the sophists in order to take up their ways, much like a descent into the cave of the *Republic* to be with the prisoners. Instead, I want to maintain that the structural differences of the dialogue from comedy, and Socrates' response to *aporia*, distinguish Socrates from the sophists.

serious politics; comedy acted as social critic and not only for the release of laughter (Henderson 1990). Henderson writes that Greek poets were expected to "comment on, and seek to influence public influence about issues of major importance—that same matters that were presented or might be presented to the voting demos." (Henderson 1990, 271). Indeed, as Cicero much later argues, one way in which humor works is through its attentiveness to particular human tensions. Some of these tensions are the fairly universal ones of bodily *erôs*, expressed in all the banality of Greek comedy. But often, Aristophanic comedy addresses the more refined tensions of a changing social landscape of politics, war, gender, and power, e.g., those found in the *Lysistrata* or *Assemblywomen*. In the *Protagoras* we can see these same deeper political tensions, in which the role of educator was unclear in a society whose citizens felt simultaneously proud of and anxious of its democratic processes after the losses of the Peloponnesian War and demise of Athens.

However, in the *Protagoras*, the comic action sustains a care for reason as educative even when its use fails to produce a final, definitive solution to either theoretical or practical questions. Unlike the kind of misology implied by the irresolvable *agôn* between the stronger and weaker argument in the *Clouds*, Socrates in his movement toward, rather than away from, *aporia* shows us a willingness to remain longer in these tensions, ambiguities, and unsolved problems. In this way, Socrates is unlike the sophists of the *Clouds* and also unlike their frustrated opponents. Socrates expresses some confidence that further inquiry will help them to learn more. If the *Clouds* ends with the dramatic but simple "solution" of burning down the *phrontistêrion* and putting the sophists to death, the *Protagoras* might seem less satisfying to a common audience in suggesting more simply, "let's go back again and return to the original question." But this is, in fact, what philosophy demands, despite the more usual political demands for quick solutions and easy closure. Platonic comedy refuses the end of ambiguity when that ambiguity reflects real and serious concerns that necessitate a further deepening of the question.

The *Protagoras* presents us with a comic vision, comic in its raising of a number of nearly inescapable tensions. It offers not only intellectual tensions such as, "Can virtue be taught or not?" and "Are the virtues unified, or diverse?" but also a dramatic *theoria*, literally a dramatic *vision* suffused with human tension: a young aristocrat about to spend the family fortune before the sun has even risen, and all the lovers and beloveds (except Aristophanes) whom we also know from the *Symposium*, sitting with one another in Callias' house; the beautiful Alcibiades and Socrates' friend's teasing him about it (309a; 316a); a conflict about what the fair rules are for argument with the debators unable even to choose an umpire (335b–338e); and discussions of when and whether going to war is courageous or merely foolish, in a context in which the losses of a very recent and real war are not far from a *Platonic* audience.

Although Plato engages our emotions through such dramatic action, the dialogues are not comic performances before a large audience. Rather, they are narrated. As Anne Marie Schulz has argued, the narration of the Platonic dialogues gives us access to Socrates' thoughts and reactions, including his emotions and even his rational responses to his own emotions (Schultz 2013). To this I would add that

the narrative dimension of this dialogue, in contrast to the performative dimension, gives us as audience room to respond more carefully and rationally to its drama. A written text is one to which we can return, again and again. In the act of rereading, we can re-encounter both the arguments and the emotions that they raise. Frustrated that the dialogue has ended in *aporia*? We as interpreters can (and do) go back and wonder at whether a different path might have been made at some point in the dialogue. Perhaps the good is not reducible to pleasure as they have agreed in this argument. Perhaps the kind of knowledge that we have been assuming as *apropos* to courage is a different kind of knowing than the capacity to predict outcomes. Unlike Hippocrates, who is ready to run to Protagoras rash and unprepared, the written text and its form encourages revisiting our ideas in a way that a performed comedy can be revisited only in conversation by its participants afterwards. With Platonic dialogue, the encounter is triadic, as those who listen and engage in conversation about it also continue to have the text as a partner in that conversation. Plato's reliance upon the written text—despite the criticisms of writing that Plato acknowledges in the *Phaedrus*—move beyond the historical Socrates in giving us the gift of mediation. Plato also practices *mimêsis* but moves beyond Old Comedy insofar as within his form of imitation there is the opportunity to make a return, one that encourages critical distance and reflection back upon one's initial experience. Indeed, within this moment of reflection one might positively learn from and build upon those arguments that appear only to be aporetic; indeed, much commentary on the Platonic dialogues by scholars seeks to do exactly this, to attempt to determine what went "wrong" in the prior argument, or if some enlargement of vision is necessary in order to incorporate all of the considerations raised by such an argument.

As I have argued elsewhere, many of Socrates' arguments can be understood as a plausible elaboration or drawing out of some difficulties in the anthropology that the Protagorean myth presents (McCoy 1998). Such an interpretation, if correct, also helps us to make better sense of the dialogue's aporetic ending than if we see it as a mere failure to address the question of whether virtue can be taught. Instead, it is a way to learn something positive about why Protagoras' view of the human person is as of yet inadequate. Socrates' questioning of Protagoras is meant to show Protagoras of the theoretical insufficiency of the sophist's own anthropology, and the ways in which that anthropology does not and cannot capture all that Protagoras wishes to capture about the noble as opposed to the base, the courageous as opposed to the cowardly, and the wise as opposed to the merely calculative. That the problem is yet unfinished is evident in Socrates' claim that they have seemingly reversed positions on the question of whether virtue can be taught. Socrates' goal is to resume the discussion anew. Had Protagoras agreed, perhaps they would have revised the account of reason, or of the place of shame or justice in the human being, or some new account of the good would move them forward. However, Protagoras politely declines the invitation.

We can see in the difference between Protagoras' decline and Socrates' invitation of further philosophical exploration a difference in their emotional responses to epistemic uncertainty. Protagoras finds it deeply uncomfortable, so much so that his escape from fully experiencing the tension is to praise Socrates for being good in

argument and one who will have a good reputation for it someday. Protagoras deflects the emotions of feeling uncertain or confused that often accompany the epistemic state of not knowing, by placing the attention back on Socrates and Socrates' future. Socrates, however, seems to experience a wider range of emotions in light of their not-yet-knowing the relationship between knowledge, virtue, and teaching. He experiences *aporia* not only as epistemic uncertainty but also as an occasion that sparks his curiosity. Socrates does not turn in on himself and his own lack simply to remain in that lack, but rather responds to that lack by becoming outward oriented to his partners in conversation, energized to continue with inquiry. It is in this emotional response to his epistemic state and his ongoing commitment to the truth, as well as to his skill in argument, that we find Socrates' philosophic virtue. One response to *aporia* or to finding one's own arguments to fall short is to deflect or to avoid the discomfort. Another is to fall into despair or pessimism about the possibility of an answer. But yet another is to find a certain kind of excitement in not yet knowing, a sense that while one has run up against a limit, that the new questions raised by this felt sense of limit are an opening to further inquiry and not an unhappy closure. That this comedy ends not with violence on the house of the Callias, as the *Clouds* ends with violence on the *phrontistêrion*, is because the comic is wedded to the philosophic: the questing, forward movement of philosophical inquiry saves Socrates, and perhaps some others among his audience from the frustrations of not-knowing, finding in them a productive tension that facilitates further philosophy.

Indeed, perhaps it is now clearer why Socrates connects this conversation back to beauty and wisdom to his unnamed friend at the dialogue's beginning. Beauty is that which draws us out of ourselves and toward something outside of ourselves. In the *Phaedrus*, beauty is described as producing awe and reverence (*Phaedrus* 254a–e).[6] Socrates' response to his own *aporia* is not to become dejected by his own *aporia*, but rather to seek further that which is outside of himself—to seek the objects of knowledge and also to seek further conversation with others, who contribute ideas and concepts that he alone cannot provide to himself. Thus, while Socrates suggests playfully that the conversation with Protagoras has been a case of encountering a great beauty, there is also a seriousness to Socrates' belief that their conversation has been beautiful despite its sense of being unfinished.

So, the simple ending of the dialogue has neither the "god from the machine" of tragedy, nor the dramatic violence of Aristophanes' burnt down school for sophists. Socrates says only, "we left." As Gonzalez has noted, Plato is intentionally silent as to whom the first person plural refers (Gonzalez 2014, 63–63). Is it Hippocrates or Alcibiades? Has Socrates been successful in his efforts to educate and so to free Alcibiades? We do not know with clarity, but the dramatic ambiguity only reinforces the complexity of the dialogue's words as to the difficulty in determining whether virtue can be taught. Yet this dramatically ambiguous exodus functions well in a Platonic dialogue that is read and not staged, for it also allows us to enter

[6] Thanks to Olof Pettersson for raising the problem for me of what the relationship between beauty and *aporia* might be, given the *Phaedrus'* approach to beauty as that which produces awe.

more deeply into its possibilities. While Protagoras rejects Socrates' assertion that further inquiry is needed, the dialogue's audience need not reject Plato's invitation. Socrates and his unnamed companion leave, while Plato as author of the written dialogue leaves us free to make another return.

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Socrates' Irony: A Voice from Nowhere? On Voice (*Phônê*), *Topos*, and *Atopos* in Plato's *Protagoras*

Vigdis Songe-Møller

I shall start with the well-known first words in *Protagoras*: "*Pothen, o Sôkratês, phainê*?" "Where have you just come from, Socrates?"[1] an anonymous friend[2] asks. However, this friend doesn't wait for an answer, which he thinks he knows:

> No, don't tell me. It's pretty obvious that you have been hunting the ripe and ready Alcibiades. Well, I just saw him the other day, and he is certainly still a beautiful man – and just between the two of us, 'man' is the proper word, Socrates: his beard is still filling out. (309a1–5)

This is an insult, and a rather grave one, although it is put in a playful way, and also in private – "between the two of us", as the friend assures Socrates. According to Athenian customs, a citizen was not supposed to pursue as his lover a youth who had already grown a beard, i.e. a youth who had become a *man*.[3] Socrates, however, takes the friend's accusation lightly: "Well, what of it?" he says, – a provocative answer, as if he says: "What do I care about Athenian customs?" And he continues, playfully and provocatively, by appealing to another authority: "I thought you were an admirer of Homer, who says that youth is most charming when the beard is first blooming, which is just the stage Alcibiades is at" (309a6–b2).

With these opening words, Socrates is questioning the basis of the Athenian virtues[4] and thus points to a central topic in the conversation he is about to relate to his friend. But before he starts, Socrates reveals more of his relation to his

[1] Unless otherwise specified, the translations of the *Protagoras* are by Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell, in Plato (1997).

[2] The Greek word for "friend" is *hetairos*. Lampert (2010, 22) argues for another translation: "a 'comrade', like a shipmate or messmate – not *friend*."

[3] Cf. Lampert (2010, 22): "Socrates' pursuit of Alcibiades borders on the criminal or at least the disreputable."

[4] Cf. Stokes (1986, 184).

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surroundings, surroundings understood in a very broad, but also fundamental, way. Socrates confirms his friend's suspicion:

> You're right, of course: I *was* just with him. But there's something really strange I want to tell you about. Although we were together, I didn't pay him any mind; in fact I forgot all about him most of the time. (309b6–9)

Socrates wants to tell his friend "something really strange", something *atopon*. This adjective, *atopos*, is also used towards the end of the dialogue, when Socrates imagines that if the discussion between himself and Protagoras had its own voice, *phônê*, "it would say, mockingly, 'Socrates and Protagoras, how strange, *atopoi*, you are, both of you'" (361a–b). Since this characterization of Socrates is not unique, since also in other dialogues Socrates is called *atopos*,[5] it might not be a coincidence that Plato makes Socrates start his narration of what happened in Callias' house by calling it *atopon*, and that he also makes Socrates end his story by characterizing the two main dialogue partners as *atopoi*.[6]

Atopos is a negation of the word *topos*, which means a physical, or geographical, "place", or a "region". According to Liddell and Scott, the basic meaning of *atopos* is "out of place", or "out of the way", which may be understood in both a concrete and metaphorical way. This double meaning seems to be present when Phaedrus, in the dialogue named after him, says to Socrates, who, for once, is outside the city walls:

> and you, my remarkable friend, seem to be totally out of place (*atopôtatos*). … you seem to need a guide (*xenagoumenô*), not to be one of the locals. (*Phaedrus*, 230c–d)

Socrates is here described as a foreigner in his own neighborhood, a *xenos*. But another, metaphorical meaning is also present: Socrates is a foreigner, a *xenos*, and out of place in relation to his fellow citizens, their values and their politics. This double meaning may also be read into Socrates' use of the word *atopos* in the *Protagoras*. I shall try to explain how in the course of this paper.

I think there is reason to make a connection between Socrates' characterization of his narration – i.e. the rest of the dialogue – as *atopos*, and the dialogue's opening words: "*Pothen*, *o Sôkratês*, *phainê*?" This question is obviously meant to be understood in a very concrete sense: "From where (that is, from which physical place), Socrates, have you just come?" The word *phainê*, which is here translated as "have just come", is the present tense of the verb *phainesthai*, which basic, and also common, meaning is "come to light", "appear", "show forth". The opening question can therefore also be interpreted in a metaphorical way: "From where, Socrates, are you

[5] For instance in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates says: "… they say that I am a very odd sort of person (*atopôtatos*) [always causing people to get into difficulties (*aporein*)]" (149a), and in the *Symposium* Alcibiades characterizes both Socrates and his *logoi* by the word *atopia* (221d). See Weber (1998, 453–456) for a discussion on the function of *atopos* in the *Phaedrus*. Thanks to Erlend Breidal, both for this reference and for his reflections on the importance of the theme of *atopia* for understanding the character of Socrates (cf. his unpublished paper "'Place' (*topos*) and 'Strangeness' (*atopia*) in the *Phaedrus*").

[6] I am indebted to Rørstadbotten for making me aware of the central theme of *atopia* in the *Protagoras* (Chapter "Turning Towards Philosophy: A Reading of *Protagoras* 309a1–314e2 in this volume).

appearing (*phainê*)?"[7] From where does Socrates, as a philosopher, come?[8] From which philosophical place, *topos*, does he appear, for instance in this very dialogue, the *Protagoras*?

My contention is, in other words, that not only the opening question, but also Socrates' own characterization of his narration as *atopos*, are concerned with the notion of *place*, in both a concrete and a metaphorical meaning of the word. I have already hinted at it by citing Socrates' provocative answer to his friend's insulting question: by his indifference to the customs of his home city, he places himself outside it, as if he were a foreigner, and by appealing to Homer as an ethical authority, he, in an ironic way, avoids giving a justification for his actions. From where is Socrates speaking?

The notion of, and occupation with, *place* is prominent in this dialogue. As soon as Socrates has revealed that the "really strange", *atopon*, thing he wanted to tell his anonymous friend about, is his meeting with an even more beautiful man than Alcibiades, his friend asks: "Is he a citizen or a foreigner, a *xenos*"? "A foreigner", Socrates answers, and the friend goes on: "From where?" "Abdera", Socrates answers (309c5–8). The beautiful person from Abdera is, of course, the sophist Protagoras. In the house of Callias, which is *the* place of the dialogue and one of the most prominent houses in Athens, quite a number of foreigners are present: in addition to Protagoras of Abdera, Hippias of Elis and Prodicus of Keos are there, and they are surrounded by a number of men from various Greek cities. In the course of the dialogue a poem by Simonides, also from Keos, will be thoroughly discussed, and also Pittacus from Lesbos will be brought into the discussion. Many Athenians are, of course, also present. As we shall see, these geographical differences will play a role in Socrates' narration.

In this dialogue, Socrates frequently uses the word *phônê*; no less than 18 times (cf. Quintela 2009).[9] The word can mean "language", "dialect", "speech", "utterance", "sound", or "voice". It is my contention that the way Socrates uses *phônê* can tell us something about the place, or the perspective, from which people, included Socrates himself, speak, and in the following, I shall let this word guide me through the dialogue.

It is important to have in mind that it is Socrates himself who, after the frame story of the meeting between Socrates and his friend, is the narrator in *Protagoras*. The story is told from Socrates' perspective, from his place, so to speak, and filtered through his choice of words. By paying attention to people's voices, Socrates – this is my hypothesis – is trying to situate their words, their *logoi*, in a place, which might be an individual subject, a physical place – for instance Callias' house or a geographical region – but also a group of people or some other kind of human community. I shall try to show that most of Socrates' description of these places is pervaded by irony, which necessitates the most difficult question: from what place,

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[7] Lampert's translation (2010, 21).

[8] Cf. Lampert (2010, 21): "… that question is the essential question: from where did Socrates, that singularity in the history of Greek philosophy, appear?"

[9] My discussion of *phônê* is indebted to Quintela's article, as well as to Griswold (1999).

from what position or perspective, is the ironist himself speaking? Concretely, he is speaking from the seat of his anonymous companion's slave; in other words: from a rather anonymous place (cf. Cohen 1994, 50).

Phônê occurs for the first time in the very first sentence of Socrates' narration to his unnamed friend:

> This morning, just before daybreak, while it was still dark, Hippocrates, son of Apollodorus and Phason's brother, banged on my door with his stick, and when it was opened for him he barged right in and yelled in that *voice* of his: 'Socrates, are you awake or asleep?' Recognizing his *voice*, I said: Is that Hippocrates? (310a8–b5)

Socrates here makes evident that there is a great familiarity between himself and Hippocrates: if this were not so, Hippocrates would not have entered Socrates' house the way he did, and neither would Socrates have recognized Hippocrates' voice. Through the way Socrates describes Hippocrates, we learn that he is an eager and impulsive young man, with little forethought and reflections on the consequences of his impulsive actions; he speaks and answers Socrates in the same direct, open and seemingly impulsive way, i.e. he seems to say what comes to his mind, without much reflection and hidden agendas. He even blushes when he has to admit that by going to Protagoras he seems to want to become a sophist (312a2–4). The outcome of the dialogue between Socrates and Hippocrates is that Hippocrates understands that he does not know what kind of art a sophist is knowledgeable of, and thus what a student of a sophist can expect to learn (312e4–6; cf. 313c1–4). Hippocrates is denuded, but a bit wiser than he was when he banged at Socrates' door: he now knows that he does not know what he thought he knew. But this is seemingly all: when they come to Callias' house and meet with Protagoras, Hippocrates is left out of the discussion. No more *logoi* from Hippocrates. He spoke for himself, but the place from which he spoke, was emptied, and Socrates gives us no hints whether it is being refilled or not during his presence in Callias' house.

Just as *phônê* was one of the first words with which Socrates characterized Hippocrates, it is also one of the first words he uses to describe Protagoras. When Socrates and Hippocrates enter Callias' house, they are met with a scene that Socrates makes the most of, ridiculing Protagoras and his followers and amusing his listeners and readers. According to Socrates' description, Protagoras is leading a chorus of people who dance around him in a peculiar way. Protagoras, Socrates says, "enchants them with his *voice* like Orpheus, and they follow the sound of his *voice* in a trance" (315a8–b1). Orpheus' voice, as we know, enchanted not only animals and trees and even stones, but also the dead Euridice in Hades. Socrates here seems to say that Protagoras has become an object of fascination, not because of his *logoi*, not because of what he has to say or because of his insights, but because of the sound of his voice. It is Protagoras' spectacular appearance that creates a social bond between him and his followers. Socrates presents Protagoras as a kind of rock star and the crowd around him as his enthusiastic, but uncritical, audience.

The chorus of people, dancing around the wandering Protagoras, taking "beautifully care", as Socrates expresses it, "never to get in Protagoras' way" (315b3–4), consisted mainly of foreigners, *xenoi* (315a7), but also some "locals" (315b2) –

among them Callias, the host himself – participated in this peculiar choreographed ballet. It is a strange scene, and this is obviously also something that Socrates wants to communicate: the strangeness, the foreignness, of Protagoras' performance, highlighted by the description of the effect of his voice.

Also Prodicus, who was lying in bed in a side room, wrapped up in a lot of sheepskins and blankets (315d4–6), is characterized by his voice: Socrates "really wanted to hear" what Prodicus was talking about, "but his *voice* was so deep that it set up a reverberation in the room that blurred what was being said" (316a1–2). Here, the Greek is easier to understand than the English translation: Prodicus' deep voice caused a *bombos*, and Socrates could understand nothing. *Bombos* is a word used in connection with initiations at the mysteries, and Socrates thus seems to emphasize the irrationality of both Protagoras' and Proclus' speech, as well as the irrationality of the influence they have on their fans.[10]

The three great visiting sophists – Protagoras, Hippias and Prodicus – seem to have turned the house of Callias into a strange and alienated place; it is as if Socrates enters a different world when he and Hippocrates enter Callias' house. Many commentators have noted the several hints of comparisons between Callias' house and Hades. The comparison between Protagoras' voice and that of Orpheus is one such hint, but there are far more direct ones: Socrates twice sites the *Odyssey*, from the scene where Odysseus introduces famous people whom he catches sight of in Hades. One could say that Socrates in his witty description of his entry into the house of Callias "ironically presents himself as an 'Odysseus' who has gained admission to an 'Other World'", where "even the Charon-like doorman plays an appropriate part" (cf. Willink 1983, 29). Socrates is not "at home", but amidst a lot of strangers, or, to put it differently: Socrates is himself a stranger, a person who is "out of place", *atopos*, in this house in the midst of Athens, filled not only with foreigners, but also with prominent Athenian citizens. By Socrates' description, Callias' house is turned into a symbol of strangeness, foreignness, folly, and irrationality.[11] Later on, however, this picture is totally subverted: Hippas describes the men who are assembled in Callias' house as "the wisest of the Greeks", and the

[10] Cf. *Crito* 54d2–5: "Crito, my dear friend, be assured that these are the words I seem to hear, as the Crymants seem to hear the music of their flutes, and the echoes of these words resound in me (*bombei*), and makes it impossible for me to hear anything else." According to Jordan (2004, 250), *bombos* "is almost a terminus technicus of the myesis". This allusion to the mysteries is not a far fetched one, as Callias belonged to the distinguished family of the Kerykes, one of the families that were responsible for the Eleusinian Mysteries, and Callias himself was later appointed torchbearer, the second most important priest at the Mysteries. Cf. Nails (2002, 70).

[11] In the *Protagoras*, Callias was only about 18 years old, but was soon to be sued for adultery. Nails (2002, 68) writes that the comic poet Cratinus, just a couple of years after the scene in the *Protagoras* took place, made Callius "infamous for licentious behavior", which is confirmed by the orator Andocides (1968, 131): "Hipponicus imagined that he had a son in his house; but that son was really an evil spirit, which has upset his wealth, his morals, and his whole life. So it is as Hipponicus' evil spirit that you must think of Callias." It is well known that Callias, who was the son of Hipponicus, the richest man in Greece, "reduced his grandfather's estate to less than one per cent of what it had been through extravagance on a heroic scale" (Davidson 1998, 185). Socrates' description of Callias' house did presumably not come as a surprise to Plato's readers.

house itself as the “veritable hall of wisdom”, the “greatest and most August house of the city itself” (337d4–7), a description which Socrates, at least once, seems to confirm (347c2–348a6).

But let us go back to where we were, Socrates’ entry into Callias’ house. So far, no intelligible word has been uttered, only voices have been heard, but no *logoi*. Socrates, however, goes straight up to Protagoras, and their long exchange of words begins.[12] Since I am using the word *phônê* as a guide for my reading of the text, I shall jump to Protagoras’ so-called “Great Speech” (320d–328), which Protagoras gives in order to show that virtue can be taught. “Speech” (*phônê*), I suggest, plays an important role in Protagoras’ myth, where he describes the making of mortals and the development of human beings into virtuous creatures.

Protagoras tells his audience that after Prometheus gave human beings technical knowledge and fire, they started to “articulate speech (*phônê*) and words” (322a6). *Phônê* is here used as one of the first fundamental criteria to distinguish humans from all other mortal species, that is, from the non-speaking animals, *ta aloga* (321c1). Another decisive step in the development of humans is a gift from Zeus, namely the political art (*politikê technê*, 322d5), which enabled men to live together and establish cities. When Protagoras leaves the myth and starts his argument (*logos*, 324d), he calls this art “virtue of man” (*andros aretê*, 325a2), which, however, is soon narrowed down to mean “virtue of citizen”. Protagoras gives a curious illustration of how that which originally was a gift from Zeus to *all* humans (*antrôpô*, 321d3),[13] in reality concerns only people living in cities:

> you must regard the most unjust person ever reared among humans under law as a paragon of justice compared with people lacking education (*paideia*) and law courts and the pervasive pressure to cultivate virtue (*aretês*), savages (*agrioi*) such as the playwright Pherecrates brought on stage at last year’s Lenean festival. (327c5–d4)

In other words, the worst criminal within a city is more of a human being than a “savage” is: it is living in a Greek *polis*, which is governed by law and where citizens receive *paideia*, that gives man his humanity.[14] In a *polis* all citizens have the “virtue of man”, and just as you won’t find a teacher of virtue in the city since every-

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[12] This can be seen as a parallel between Socrates’ entry into Callias’ house and Odysseus’ entry into Hades: just like the shades in Hades cannot speak until Odysseus gives them blood to drink, the sophists does not speak until Socrates enters and speaks to them. Cf. Gonzalez (2014, 41): “The other thing that makes the sophists like the insubstantial shades of Hades is the complete absence of dialogue among them: each is described as pontification in isolation from the others, neither hearing nor even, as in the case of Prodicus, being heard.”

[13] Cf. 323b7–c2: “They will say that everyone ought to claim to be just, whether they are or not, and that it is madness not to pretend to justice, since one must have some trace of it or not be human.”

[14] Cf. Quintela (2009, 262): “the passage that defines how to be a good citizen fuses together the notion of humanity with that of citizenship.” Beresford (2013, 43), on the other hand, argues that the Protagorean civic virtue is “the common property of humanity”: “His theory … succeeds in its main and original purpose of vindicating the democratic approach to the political and civic task, because it explains why the ethical talents required for good citizenship are *bound to be* the common property of humanity, the result of our universal nature and of a common and uncomplicated upbringing, …”

body is a teacher of virtue, Protagoras explains, you won't find a teacher of Greek either (cf. 327e3–328a1), since everybody knows Greek.

This is the end of Protagoras' evolutionary story of mankind. Man starts his human career by speaking, and ends by being a Greek educated citizen, speaking Greek. Here, Protagoras seems to appeal to the people present in Callias' house: they represent, more than anybody, the educated and virtuous humankind. They are his audience, and although he is no Athenian citizen, he lived there, according to Debra Nails, "for perhaps as long as forty years" (Nails 2002, 256), so their *polis* is also his community.[15] One could call Protagoras' speech a kind of self-presentation. Socrates' opening description of Callias' house can be interpreted as an ironic comment to Protagoras' presentation of himself and his "audience": Protagoras' rational speech, the mark of humanity, is in Socrates' narration transformed into an hypnotizing voice, and the virtuous and temperate citizens (cf. 323a2) are transformed into an irrational crowd, following every step of their leading star.[16]

Next time Socrates uses the word *phônê*, is in the lengthy discussion of the poem by Simonides. Here, *phônê* means "dialect". In this poem, Simonides criticizes Pittakos, one of the seven wise men, for saying: "It is hard (*chalepon*) to be good" (339c4–5). Protagoras thinks this criticism shows the poet's "monumental ignorance", since, as he says, "everyone agrees that [the possession of virtue] is the hardest thing in the world (*chalepôtaton*)" (340e5–7). Socrates, having just said that he thinks the poem is "very well made" (339b8), jokingly tries to save both his own and Simonides' skin by appealing to differences in Greek dialects:

> Maybe the people from Keos and Simonides [who came from Keos] conceived of 'hard' (*chalepon*) as 'bad' (*kakon*) or something else that you do not understand. (341b5–7)

Here, Socrates suggests that the Greek dialects may be so different that one does not even understand each other. He asks Prodicus, who, is also from Keos, for help:

> Let us ask Prodicus. He is just the right person to consult on Simonides' dialect (*Simonidou phônên*). Prodicus, what did Simonides mean by 'hard' (*chalepon*)? (341b7–c1)

Prodicus confirms that *chalepon* in Simonides' dialect means "bad" (*kakon*), and explains:

> He [Simonides] was censuring Pittacus, a man from Lesbos brought up in a barbarian dialect (*phônê*), for not distinguishing words correctly. (341c7–9)

Protagoras protests against this interpretation of the poem:

> You have got it all wrong, Prodicus. I am positive that Simonides meant by 'hard' the same thing we, the rest of us, do: not 'bad', but whatever is *not easy* and takes a lot of effort. (341d2–5)

The linguistic situation has by now become a bit confused:

[15] However, Socrates calls him a foreigner, a *xenos* (309c6).

[16] It is tempting to interpret Protagoras' tale of mankind's evolution, starting with the universal, rational man and ending with the irrational crowd present in Callias' house, as an ironic comment by Plato on Protagoras *homo mensura* theory.

- Socrates criticizes Protagoras, who was from Abdera, in the very north of Greece, for not understanding the way Simonides from Keos, an island in the southern Aegean, uses the word *chalepon*.
- According to Prodicus, who was also from Keos, Simonides criticizes Pittacus, who was from Lesbos, which is situated about in the middle between Abdera and Keos, for not using the words correctly, that is, for not using the special dialect from Keos as a linguistic norm. Prodicus therefore calls Pittacus' dialect "barbarian", although they spoke Greek in Lesbos.
- Understandably, Protagoras does not accept the dialect from Keos as a norm, and criticizes Prodicus and Socrates for not admitting that the word *chalepon* means the same for all Greeks.[17]

Protagoras seems to insinuate that Socrates, by problematizing different meanings according to different Greek dialects of the word 'hard', is inventing a non-existing phenomenon. Protagoras' view that there is just one Greek language is analogous to the way Protagoras ended his story about the evolution of men, namely that everyone is a teacher of virtue, just as everyone speaks Greek. Although this discussion about dialects is meant as a joke, Socrates comes back to it: at the end of his interpretation of the poem, he notices that Simonides writes the word "praise" (*apainêmi*) in the Lesbian dialect, "since", Socrates says, "he is addressing Pittacus" (346d7–346e2). I take Socrates' insistence on the differences between Greek dialects to be not only ironic, but also provocative: by problematizing the general notion of "speaking Greek", he, at least indirectly, undermines Protagoras' way of situating himself within a homogeneous group of Greek citizens, all speaking the same language. By confusing his listeners with all this talk about dialects, Socrates might want to show, this is my contention, that the position from which Protagoras asserts that he is speaking, is illusionary: there is no such thing as one homogeneous group of true rational and virtuous human beings, or of Greek citizens, just as there is not one homogeneous, or correct, Greek language.[18] In addition to this, Socrates seems to make the point that the sound of our voices, the particular way each of us speak, is something external and also irrelevant to *what* we are saying. In other words: Protagoras should not pretend to speak on behalf of an illusionary homogeneous group of people, for instance the group of people present in Callias' house, nor should he pay attention to the external voice – here exemplified by the meaningless discussion of the meaning of a word in a poem by an absent poet – but rather talk on behalf of himself and pay attention to *what* he is saying.

[17] Quintela (2009, 253, n. 26) refers to Aristophanes, fr. 706, "where ξενικα ονοματα are the words of the dialects other than Attic". Insisting on one Greek linguistic norm, Protagoras, though from Abdera, might have adopted the Attic dialect as this one norm.

[18] Cf. Quintela (2009, 264): "The Sophist [Protagoras] says that the Athenians teach what we call "Greek". But in reality. as Plato would make clear in the passages where he mentions φωνή, what the Athenians taught is what we call the "Attic dialect". Once more, both Herodotus and Thucydides reveal that the linguistic identity of the Greek speakers was not "Greek", but instead the specific dialect of each city or region ".

At least, this seems to be Socrates' point when he, after the discussion of Simonides' poem, tries to get Protagoras having a real dialogue with him. In his appeal to Protagoras, he uses the word *phônê* five times, here meaning "voice" and "sound". I shall cite most of it:

> For it seems to me that discourse (*dialegesthai*) on poetry is very like the drinking parties of the agora crowd. These people, because of their inability to provide their own *voices* (*heautôn phônês*) and their own words (*logôn*) while they drink – such is their lack of education – bid up the price of flute-girls and pay large fees to hire the foreign *voice* (*allotrina phônên*) of the flute, and carry on their party by way of its *sound* (*phônê*). But when educated and good men drink together, you will see neither flute-girls nor dancing girls nor female acrobats: they are capable of entertaining themselves by the use of their own *voices* (*dia tês hautôn phônês*), … And so a gathering like this of ours, when it includes such men as most of us claim to be, requires no foreign *voices* (*allotrias phônês*), not even of the poets, whom one cannot question of the sense of what they say. … No, they leave such debates alone and provide each other with their own entertainment through the medium of their own discourse, testing and being tested by each other. Such are the people you and I should imitate, in my view: we should set aside the poets and hold discourse directly with one another, putting ourselves to the test of truth. (347c2–348a6)

Socrates here indicates that so far during the dialogue, they – himself included – have behaved like "drinking parties of the agora crowd", having been unable to speak with their own voices, and instead depending on foreign voices, such as a poem by an absent poet. In contrast to the common crowd, however, the people who are gathered in Callias' house, who claim to be educated people, people of *paideia*, should be able to depend on their own voices, speaking directly to one another.

In this paragraph, ironic and non-ironic utterances seem to be mixed. On the one hand, Socrates appeals to the self-image of the people present, describing them as "educated and good men", with whom he seemingly identifies, referring to "a gathering like ours". This description is a sharp contrast to the one he gave when he entered Callias' house, a house of folly where he was out of place. On the other hand, at the end of the paragraph, he seems to set up his own dialectical discourse as a model: we should be discoursing directly with one another, speaking with our own voices, testing and being tested, putting ourselves to the test of truth.[19] In saying this, Socrates is hardly ironic. One could say that this is exactly what he has been trying to do all along while speaking with Protagoras, namely getting Protagoras to speak for himself, instead of showing off with an enchanting and irrational voice, instead of speaking in the name of a quasi universal notion of man, or instead of interpreting a poem.

But: from which position has Socrates been speaking? Socrates himself gives us a hint when he, towards the very end of his narration, says:

> It seems to me that our discussion (*exodos tôn logôn*) has turned on us, and if it had a voice (*phônên*) of its own, it would say, mockingly, 'Socrates and Protagoras, how ridiculous (*atopoi*) you are, both of you'. (361a3–6)

[19] Cf. Griswold (1999), 288: "Socrates here sketches an ideal and tells us to model ourselves on it. The ideal is that of a person who relies on his or her own voice".

The *exodos* of the *logoi* – that is the final word of the argument itself, its conclusion, its word of departure – claims, according to Socrates, that both Socrates and Protagoras have been *atopoi*, out of place. As I have tried to show, Protagoras has been *atopos* in the sense that he has been speaking from an illusionary place, from the perspective of an imagined homogenous group of educated Athenian citizens, that is, from the perspective of the people he, as a teacher, is dependent on, and whom he, by his charismatic voice, tries to make dependent on him.[20] As Socrates explained to Hippocrates in the beginning of his narration, the sophists recommend their products and sell them to anybody who wants them (313d6–7). In other words: the sophists must try to make others believe that they need what the sophists have to offer, and the sophists will have to offer what they believe that their costumers want. One could say that the *topos* from which Protagoras pretends to speak is a make believe which Socrates has managed to dissolve: Protagoras started out by arguing that virtue can be taught, and ended up by having to admit that according to his own arguments, virtue cannot be taught. In other words: what Protagoras thought was firm ground, turned out to be mere quicksand.

The effect of Socrates' ironies, jokes, and arguments on his two main dialogue partners has been a negative one: Protagoras is left with contradiction and bewilderment, and Hippocrates with a confession of not knowing what he is seeking to learn from Protagoras. While Protagoras has been speaking with a foreign, or external voice, from an illusionary *topos*, Hippocrates may be said to have spoken with his own voice, although Socrates seemed to reveal the emptiness of the place from which he was speaking. What may Socrates have been aiming at in causing all this unrest and bewilderment? Maybe to create a starting point for philosophical reflection?

And what about Socrates himself? Also he, like Protagoras, ends up by subverting his original position. But Socrates, unlike Protagoras, is the one who has created the subversion of positions. When Socrates in the beginning of the dialogue denies that virtue can be taught, he argues on the basis of a technical conception of virtue.[21] When he, on the other hand, in the end argues that if virtue can be taught, it is because virtue has turned out to be *epistêmê* (361b1–2). What *epistêmê* is, however, is left open, and Socrates ends up by appealing to Protagoras to examine once again what virtue is. In other words: Socrates ends by confessing his ignorance, having demonstrated that the question "What is virtue?" does not have a simple, positive answer. While he has been trying to reveal the externality of Protagoras' voice, Socrates himself, I would claim, has all along been the subject of his own voice.

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[20] On the mutual dependence of Protagoras and his audience, see Berger (1984).

[21] Cf. Gonzalez (2014, 43), who claims that Socrates' purpose, when arguing that virtue cannot be taught, is to demonstrate "the absurdity of a technical conception of virtue". Moreover, in order to show that virtue is not teachable, Socrates refers to the inability of people like Pericles to teach their sons virtue (319e3–320b5). He thus uses arguments "which were based on the wisdom of the Athenians and the goodness of their statesmen, two bases he will hardly have thought of as unshakable" (Stokes 1986, 439).

But what does Socrates mean when he says that also he himself, according to the outcome of the discussion with Protagoras, is *atopos*? What kind of *logos* has he appealed to during his visit in Callias' house? From the very moment he entered Callias' house, he distanced himself from the place and the people who were assembled there. One could say that Socrates, with his jokes, his irony, and his not always straight arguments, has tried to deconstruct this community of sophists and educated, decent Greek citizens and their self-proclaimed universal rationality. But from which perspective? In the very end of his narration, Socrates suggests that he is talking from the perspective of one that does not know, that is, from an indeterminate *topos* within *logos*.[22]

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[22] Cf. Cohen (1994, 47), who suggests that the whole dialogue may be characterized as *atopos*: "The *Protagoras* enjoys an odd reputation – odd, let us say, in the sense of *atopos*, place-less or uncanny, a term first used by and of Socrates in the opening (309b). What one commentator has called Socrates' 'hedonist calculus' at the end … a 'crack in the unity of Plato' (Raven), might almost be applied to the whole dialogue."

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Dangerous Voices: On Written and Spoken Discourse in Plato's *Protagoras*

Olof Pettersson

Plato's *Protagoras* contains, among other things,[1] three short but puzzling remarks on the media of philosophy. First, at 328e5–329b1, Plato makes Socrates worry that long speeches, just like books, are deceptive, because they operate in a discursive mode void of questions and answers. Second, at 347c3–348a2, Socrates argues that discussion of poetry is a presumptuous affair, because, the poems' message, just like the message of any written text, cannot be properly examined if the author is not present. Third, at 360e6–361d6, it becomes clear that even if the conversation between Socrates and Protagoras was conducted by means of short questions and answers, this spoken mode of discourse is problematic too, because it ended up distracting the inquiry from its proper course. As this paper[2] sets out to argue, Plato does not only make Socrates articulate these worries to exhibit the hazards of discursive commodification. In line with Socrates' warning to the young Hippocrates of the dangers of sophistic rhetoric, and the sophists' practice of trading in teachings, they are also meant to problematize the thin line between philosophical and sophistical practice. By examining these worries in the light of how the three relevant modes of discourse are exemplified in the dialogue, this paper aims to isolate and clarify the reasons behind them in terms of deceit, presumptuousness and dis-

[1] Nowadays, is often thought that the *Protagoras*' should be understood in the light of its "negative dialectic" and Socrates' attempt to refute whatever Protagoras is taken to represent. So, e.g. Long (2005), McCoy (2008), Russel (2000), and Hemmenway (1996). Cf. also Klosko (1980), Zeyl (1980), and Grube (1933). This line of thought stands in contrast to the view that the *Protagoras* is primarily designed to give voice to a set of more positive ideas. The three usual suspects are: (1) *the Unity of the Virtues*, e.g. Vlastos (1972); Woodruff (1976), Kraut (1984), Penner (1973), Brickhouse and Smith (1997), and O'Brien (2003), (2) *the Denial of Akrasia*, e.g. Brickhouse and Smith (2007) and Devereux (1995), and (3) some version of *Hedonism*, e.g. Cronquist (1975) and Hackforth (1928). For a survey, see Lavery (2007).

[2] I am grateful to Marina McCoy for her comments on an early version of this text.

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traction; and to argue that these reasons cast doubts on the common assumption that the dialogue's primary aim is to show how sophistical rhetoric must succumb to Socratic dialectic (e.g. Long 2005, 3; Benitez 1992, 242; Stenzel 1973, 31).

The Nature and Teachability of Virtue

Although the self-critical vein of these passages has not received much attention in the scholarly literature,[3] the dialogue's unsettling character is often acknowledged.[4] Besides the many signs of Protagoras' reluctance to adapt to what seems to be Socrates' preferred mode of discourse, viz. short questions and answers, and Socrates' repeated failure to meet his own standards,[5] the dialogues' most prominent disappointment is its failure to settle the questions of what virtue is and whether or not it can be taught.[6] Socrates ends his narration of the encounter with Protagoras by describing what he considers to have been at stake all along:

> But no, I [sc. Socrates] said, I am asking all of these things for no other reason than a wish to investigate (σκέψασθαι βουλόμενος) how things concerning virtue stand (πῶς ποτ᾽ ἔχει τὰ περὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς), and what virtue itself is (τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶν αὐτό, ἡ ἀρετή). (360e6–8)[7]

However, this wish has not been satisfied. Should their discourse get a voice (φωνή) of its own, Socrates says, it would scorn and laugh at them (361a4–5). By means of a subtle distinction between what something is *like* and what something *is*, Socrates explains why:

> And having already gone through these things, I would now like us to go on to investigate also what virtue is (ἡμᾶς ἐξελθεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὅτι ἔστιν), and then once again investigate whether it is teachable or not (καὶ πάλιν ἐπισκέψασθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ εἴτε διδακτὸν εἴτε μὴ διδακτόν). (361c4–6)

Clearly disappointed, Socrates outlines an alternative and better course of action. He wants to start the examination of virtue anew, but this time with reference to the

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[3] One important exception is Woolf (1999). Cf. McCoy (1999, 359). The reference to written and spoken discourse in the *Protagoras* is often mentioned in passing in discussions of the *Phaedrus*, e.g. Mackenzie (1982), Murray (1988), Rowe (1986), Griswold (1986, esp. 222), and Heath (1989).

[4] E.g., Grube (1975, 235). The dialogue's many logical problems are outlined by Taylor (1976). Vlastos is annoyed (1956, xxiv). Trivigno (2013) argues that the dialogue shows the impossible task of interpretation. McCoy (1999, 358) claims that Socrates offers a series of "deliberate misreadings". Griswold (1999, 283) claims that "one of the striking aspects of the […] conversation [in the *Protagoras*] is its failure as a philosophical dialogue." Frede (1986, 736) and Schofield (1992, 132) agree.

[5] Cf. 335a4–8 with 319a8–320c1; 342a6–347a5; 347b8–348a9; 348c5–349d1; 352a1–c7; 354e3–356c3; 356c4–e4.

[6] So Griswold (1999, 283 and 288), Politis (2012), and Klosko (1980). See also Benitez (1992) and Frede (1992).

[7] If not otherwise stated, the translations are my own.

question of what virtue *is*.[8] Since both Socrates and Protagoras have said quite a lot about virtue, this call for a renewed examination is telling. The dialogue does not only lack an account of what virtue *is*. All its talk about the qualities of virtue seems to have been in vain. Why?

Socrates does not elaborate the underlying distinction. But it is in line with what Plato has to say about this elsewhere.[9] Although Socrates and Protagoras discuss the possible quality of virtue, by considering what virtue can be like (i.e. teachable or not), they have not managed to capture that distinguishing feature that makes virtue into what it is. The problem, however, is not only that their discussion merely lacks vital information on this matter. It has also distracted the search from its proper course. Instead of first examining what virtue is, and in turn continue to ask about its teachability, the discussion started in the middle and put the examination on the wrong track from the beginning. And insofar as the dialogue is read as an explicit account of Socrates' take on virtue, this is clearly problematic.

A Warning

As recently pointed out, there are however reasons to doubt that the sole aim of the *Protagoras* is to be an inquiry into what virtue is, and whether or not it can be taught. It has accordingly also been argued reasonable to understand the purpose of the dialogue in a different light.[10] Read as a preliminary warning of what shall come, Socrates' introductory conversation with the young Hippocrates is telling. Clearly with Hippocrates' naïve trust in Protagoras' skills in mind (e.g. 310d6, 310e6 or 312c6), Plato makes Socrates outline the hazards (κίνδυνοι, 313a2) involved. When one involves oneself with a sophist, we learn, one risks more than one's physical health. If handled without the proper knowledge, Protagoras' teachings can affect the soul (314b2–3), just like bad food can poison and sicken the body.

Socrates introduces his account of these hazards (313c7–314c2) by likening the sophist to a trader (ἔμπορος) or merchant (κάπηλος, 313c5). Although it is made clear that it is hard to pinpoint in what exactly the sophist trades, it has something to do with his voice. The sophist, Hippocrates suggests, is the wisest, or most skilled, in speaking (cf. 310e6–7: "σοφώτατον εἶναι λέγειν"). And, as he continues, the sophist is someone in control of making his clients clever speakers (cf. 312d6–7: "ἐπιστάτην τοῦ ποιῆσαι δεινὸν λέγειν"). Without contradicting Hippocrates, Socrates also goes on to suggests what this may amount to: The sophist trades in

[8] So Politis (2012, 222). Cf. 360e8–361a3. For discussion of these passages, see Politis (2012, 210ff), Denyer (2012), Robinson (1953a), Benson (2009, esp. 18n53), Prior (1998), and Wolfsdorf (2004).

[9] E.g. *Epist. VII*. 343b7–c3; *Men.* 71a1–72d1; *Rep*. 354a12–c3; *Lach*. 190b7–c2; *Gorg*. 448e6–449a4.

[10] E.g. McCoy (2008), Gonzales (2000), Benitez (1992), and Griswold (1999). See also Lavery (2007).

teachings (μαθήματα, 313c7; Gonzalez 2000, 114 and Griswold 1999, 299n46). In treating the products of his voice as detached commodities (ἀγώγιμος, 313c5), Protagoras considers discursive interaction to be strictly business. Although he uses his voice to defend his teachings in argument – otherwise no one would buy them – he does not think that he needs to be personally involved in the practices they describe, or in the views they support.[11]

Although this account of the sophist is articulated before Protagoras himself is introduced, it is confirmed by Protagoras' own words.[12] Not only is it clear that he considers himself a part of a great tradition of poets and musicians, experts proficient primarily in the arts of the voice. Protagoras also emphasizes the competitive aspect of his trade by associating its traditions with two athletes (Iccus and Herodicus, 316d9–317e1, cf. 332e2–4, 335a4–8 and 337b1).[13] In the long speech with which Protagoras introduces his own take on virtue – the so-called *Great Speech* – the notion of discursive merchandise is also confirmed. Here, Protagoras tells the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus; in the middle of which he also lays bare his views on the nature and origin of language. The human voice (φωνή) and its ability to articulate words or names (ὀνόματα), he says, was given to humanity together with the other arts (τέχναι, 322a6). In this respect, the products of the human voice are no different than houses, clothes, sandals, beds and food. On Protagoras view, there is supposedly no closer link between the soul and the voice than between the producer and the product. Dissociated from political or social skill ("τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην", 322b8) – a skill later given to humanity by Zeus in the form of justice (δίκη) and shame (αἰδώς, 322c2) – language and discursive interaction is considered to be a competitive enterprise alien to the bonds that unite people in friendship (cf. 322c3: "δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί").[14]

[11] So Griswold (1999, 292f.): "[Protagoras' enchanting voice] is a voice that lets Protagoras make himself public but not accountable to others […] The externality to self of sophist discourse is implicit in their commodification. [Protagoras] lacks a real interest in his students considered as individuals. [H]e does not really care about them in a way that would foster their growth as self-critical and independent thinkers".

[12] I am here only discussing some aspects of the way Protagoras is represented in Plato's dialogue. For a discussion of the historical person, see Notomi (2013) and Woodruff (2013).

[13] So Schofield (1992, 129f.). On Orpheus (poet), Musaeus (poet and mystic) and Herodicus (athlete and sports physician), see Sauppe (1889). On Iccus (athlete and dietologist), see Adam (1893). On Agathocles and Pythocleides (musicians), see Smith (1873, s.v. *Pythocleides*) and Sauppe (1889).

[14] Cf. 322b5. See also McCoy (2008, 63). On Protagoras' theory of language, see Rademaker (2013).

Discursive Hazards

Although it may seem to be beyond doubt that Socrates' introductory account of Protagoras' practice is designed to prepare Hippocrates for the dangers involved in interacting with a sophist, it tells us very little about what results this may have in actual practice. Further down the line, however, there are three passages that spell out the problems in some more detail.

The first passage includes a critique of Protagoras' discursive proficiency. Having just been given a brilliant example of Protagoras' art, in the form of his long speech on virtue, Plato makes Socrates expresses an important worry.

> Should someone consult the public speakers regarding this matter, he would probably hear something similar from Pericles or from some other able speaker. But if he should ask them something more, they themselves, *just like books*, have nothing either to answer or to ask. For, if someone poses even some small question about what they have said, they go on unless someone interrupts, just like the sound from a copper kettle. And rhetors, in this way, when asked small questions, extend the speech at length. (328e5–329b1, italics added)

On the face of it, the target is Protagoras' speech. But, in consequence of Socrates' peculiar way of phrasing the matter, the critique extends beyond its the boundaries. In principle, it applies to any mode of discourse similar to what may be communicated in the form of written text.[15] Suggestive, perhaps, of the conceit of Plato's fiction, Socrates does not comment on this (so, e.g., Woolf 1999, 21). Instead he specifies the core problem, which seems to be the speech's length.[16] Why? Socrates' initial response to Protagoras' words is telling. Long speeches, he says, are enchanting. "As for me", Socrates explains, "for a good while I was still under his spell (καὶ ἐγὼ ἐπὶ μὲν πολὺν χρόνον κεκηλημένος)" (328d4–5). Comparing Protagoras with Orpheus, with whom Protagoras has just likened himself (316d8), Socrates describes Protagoras and his voice (φωνή) in terms of their power to charm and beguile (κηλεῖν, 315a8).[17] Socrates' introductory way of characterizing Protagoras' followers emphasizes this critique. As if in some bewitched trance, they dance around him.

[15] So Woolf (1999, 22). For discussion in relation the *Phaedrus*, see Ferrari (1987) and Pettersson (2013).

[16] There are five longer speeches in the dialogue, excluding Socrates': 316c6–317c5; 320c2–328d2; 334a3–c6 (Protagoras); 337a1–c4 (Prodicus); 337c6–b2 (Hippias). In these speeches it is possible to identify a variety of rhetorical techniques. Three are explicitly mentioned: (1) enchantment (328d4–5), (2) argument *ad populum* (334c7–8), and (3) diversion (336c4–d2). Despite Socrates' critique of long speeches he sets forth eight by himself: 319a8–320c1; 342a6–347a5; 347b8–348a9; 348c5–349d1; 352a1–c7; 354e3–356c3; 356c4–e4; 356e5–357e8. For a lucid discussion of Socrates' use of long speeches, see Benitez (1992, esp. 240).

[17] The deceptive character of discourse is also reflected in Protagoras' account of the origin of language. Besides being disassociated from the arts of social interaction and cooperation, we also learn that language is a stolen gift. Taken by Prometheus from the building of Athena and Hephaestus – the two deities endowed with the greatest of cunning (μῆτις) – it was given to humanity in stealth. For discussion, see Vernant and Detienne (1974). In Protagoras' biographical comments, he also explains in what way sophistry is, and has always been, a matter of stealth and disguise (e.g. 316d6).

They “follow where the voice sounds” (315b1). Just like books, without offering the opportunity for questions and answers – a method on which Socrates soon shall come to insist – Protagoras’ long speech does not promote critical scrutiny. Instead, just like the sound from a gong, it is designed to drown all other voices but its own. As we soon shall see in some detail, Socrates has reasons to doubt the benevolence of Protagoras’ voice.

In a second passage, Socrates outlines a further danger. In terms of his and Protagoras’ attempt to interpret a poem by Simonides – on what is means to be a good person – Socrates explains that this mode of discourse is dangerous because it gives the appearance of being able to accomplish something that it cannot accomplish. It is presumptuous.

> It seems to me that conversation about poetry is just like the gatherings of the vulgar and ordinary human. Without being able to be together with each other by themselves, when they are drinking, using their own voices and their own words, because they lack education, they enjoy flute-girls, contracting the many voices of the flute, and through these voices they are together. But when those that gather are beautiful and good, because they have a good education, you would see neither flute-girls nor dance-girls not harp-girls, for they [the well-educated] are together in an appropriate way with each other, without ornaments or entertainment, and they speak and listen to each other in turn in an orderly fashion, also when they have been drinking. This gathering [of ours] is such, that is, if it consists of men of that kind that many of us claim to be. It does not need alien voices or poets, who one cannot ask about what they are saying. When such things are introduced into the discourse, many say that the poet means this, and others say that the poet means that, because they are conversing about a matter that cannot be put to the test. But educated men avoid the delight of being together in that way. Instead they are together with each other through one another, using their own voices, and they put each other to the test in turns. (347c3–348a2)

In contrast to the act of conversing by means of your own voice, Socrates outlines the dangers of interpretation. Just as the first passage, these words seem to have a specific target. As pointed out by Raphael Woolf, “[Socrates’] immediate target is the reading and interpreting of poetry, as represented by Simonides’ poem; but of course the criticism applies in principle to any form of written word”.[18] With a subtle yet clearly self-critical tone, Plato offers his readers reasons to doubt that an object of an interpretative act can express an independent teaching of its own. As we soon shall see in some more detail, Socrates does not only argue that it is impossible to determine the meaning of a voice that has been dissociated from its source. By means of staging his own interpretation, he also exposes the presumptions involved in such an endeavor.

Besides the dangers of deceitful speech and presumptuous interpretation, Plato does also make Socrates specify a third discursive hazard. In the light of Socrates’ wish to find out what virtue is, and whether or not it can be taught, the conclusion is clear. Because it distracted the investigation from its proper course, Socrates’ conversation with Protagoras has turned out to be dangerously topsy-turvy (cf. 361c3: “ἄνω κάτω ταραττόμενα δεινῶς”). But before we turn to this third danger in more detail, let us first take a closer look the first two.

[18] Woolf (1999, 22). So also Trivigno (2013, 541).

Long Speeches

Although there may be reasons to consider Protagoras' speech to be more consistent and subtle than Socrates seems to allow,[19] and even if Socrates claims that he does not mistrust Protagoras' capacity to defend himself when questioned (329b1–5), Socrates' critical attitude towards long speeches is beyond doubt. Just like books, we learn, they aim to sway their addressees by bypassing the possibility of questioning and answering. In this sense they are deceptive. But what exactly are the mechanisms involved here? And what is at stake?

If we look at Socrates' concise way of articulating his critique in the light of its explicit target (viz. Protagoras' *Great Speech*) and Protagoras role as a teacher, one plausible account emerges. As has been argued, most recently by Francisco Gonzalez, Protagoras has reasons to defend his practice as an expert and teacher of virtue without offending the democratic point of view of his potential customers.[20] But this, as we shall see, he cannot do without hiding his true intensions. Protagoras speech is deceptive in this sense. And Socrates sees it all along.

In reply to Socrates' suggestion that virtue cannot be taught – with virtue here being broadly identified with the political art (ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη, 319a4) – Protagoras answers that Socrates has missed the point.[21] The fact that the Athenian assembly does not call in experts when it comes to political matters, as Socrates has just pointed out (319b–e), is not a sign that there is no art to be taught.[22] Instead, Protagoras explains, virtue is democratically distributed. In contrast to the other arts, given to man by Prometheus, Zeus decided to give political virtue (ἡ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή, 322e2–323a1) to everyone (322c1–323a3). Aware of Socrates' efforts to oppose him to the democratic point of view of the Athenians, Protagoras avoids undermining the legitimacy of their constitution.[23]

In order not to undermine the legitimacy of his own art, Protagoras will however also need to defend the opposite position, namely that there is need for his expertise.

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[19] E.g. Garver (2004), Gagarin (1969, 48), Jowett (1953, I.119–31), and Adkins (1973). See also Lavery (2007).

[20] Gonzalez (2000, 117ff.). So also Stokes (1986, 235). See also Hemmenway (1996) and Adkins (1973).

[21] Since it is not established what virtue is, it is hard to pinpoint exactly against what Protagoras is objecting. Frede (1992, xii) notes: "Often this [πολιτικὴ τέχνη] is translated as 'the art of politics,' but, from the context, what Protagoras has in mind is perhaps rather the art of the citizen, the competence that makes a citizen a good citizen (cf. 319a4–5), part of which is to run one's household properly". As pointed out by Griswold (1999, 299n46) in view of the sophist's detachment from citizenship, travelling from city to city to sell his goods, the claim that Protagoras considered virtue to be a matter of citizenship rings somewhat hollow.

[22] Vlastos (1956, x) points out that Socrates' silent premise here is that an art is something that is "taught to a few by a few".

[23] So Gonzales (2000, 117). See also Taylor (1976, esp. 83) or Stokes (1986).

In reply to another claim that Socrates makes – that the best citizens cannot teach virtue to their sons – Protagoras proceeds to argue that there is something called *natural aptitude* (cf. 327b8, i.e. being εὐφυής).[24] Clearly unjustified in the light of his preceding myth, Protagoras compares the art of politics with the art of flute-playing. Just as in the case of excellent flute players there is no reason to think that the best citizens beget the best children (327bf). Aptitude pops up here and there. And, if someone – like Protagoras (328b1–2) – shows signs of being a little superior, one should be grateful.

Although Protagoras presents this point as in line with his myth, this coherence does not seem capable of holding up under further scrutiny. As Socrates points out, however, the length of Protagoras' speech makes any such scrutiny practically impossible (328e5–329b1). The simple conclusion we can draw from this limitation is however important. For even if there may be reasons to think that Protagoras' speech has other and more subtle virtues, this line of thought may help us to understand Socrates' worry. Socrates' identification of the charming and deceptive nature of long speeches can be understood in terms of their stealth and lack of argumentative transparency. Protagoras' speech shows clear signs of making its point by covering up its inconsistencies; and Socrates worry can thus be understood in terms of the generalized idea that long speeches are persuasive by their ability to hide their true intensions.

There is another passage in the dialogue that emphasizes this point further: Socrates' own "great" speech. Introduced at 310a7, as an account of his and Hippocrates' early morning meeting and their subsequent encounter with Protagoras, the speech does not end until the dialogue does (at 362a4). In the light of Socrates' efforts to undermine and change Protagoras' preference for long speeches, it soon becomes clear that also Socrates' own long speech is deceptive.

Socrates' explicit attempt to cast doubt on Protagoras' preferred mode of discourse, viz. long speeches (328e5–329b1), is supplemented by an argument from pity, beginning at 334c6. Here, Plato makes Socrates appeals to the compassion of his audience. As an attempt to dismiss Protagoras' argument for the multiform (ποικίλον) nature of the good (τὸ ἀγαθὸν, 334b6) Socrates claims that because of the length of Protagoras' defense, and his own forgetfulness, the mode of the present argumentation must change. Instead of long speeches, Socrates wants the discussion to consist of short questions and equally short answers. Protagoras, however, is not that easily persuaded, and as a consequence Socrates stands up and claims that he should leave (335c8). This behavior results in a negotiation of the formal rules of the discussion (335c8–338e2) and Protagoras eventually agrees to keep to short questions and answers (338e2–5).

Leaving aside Socrates' reasons for wanting to disrupt the argument at this point, the deceptive nature of Socrates' "great" speech should nevertheless be clear. Socrates' appeal to forgetfulness is a trick. Although it is easy to fall for Socrates'

[24] According to Schofield (1992, 128n8–9) neither this, nor Socrates' first objection against the teachability of virtue, are original: The first was a well-known topic of sophistic debate. The second is to be found in *Dissoi Logoi* (Diels-Kranz 90.6).

charm, it is clear that he is not honest, because it is beyond doubt that Socrates is able to remember more than one Stephanus page of argument. Socrates is not trying to express his honest beliefs (as suggested at 331c4–d1). And even if we might accept Socrates' argument from pity anyway, as Alcibiades seems to do (336d2–4), Socrates' critique of the deceptiveness of long speeches seems to be confirmed also by his own words.[25]

Interpretation of Poetry

If what has been stated above is on target, Socrates considers long speeches to be dangerous because they are deceptive. This danger may however seem to be easily counteracted. By means of analysis and interpretation one should be able to detect cunning tricks and inconsistencies. Within the framework of the new rules of communication established after Socrates' attempt to leave (335c8–338e2), the *Protagoras* also offers two telling examples of how interpretation and analysis can expose contradictions and disguised motives: Protagoras' analysis of Simonides' poem, on what it means to be a good person; and, Socrates' own.[26] Eventually, Socrates will of course draw the conclusion that also this discursive mode is problematic. Just like the interpretation of any text, discussion of poetry will turn out to be presumptuous. In order to understand why Socrates draws this conclusion, let us take a closer look at some parts of the passages that exemplifies this practice.

Having agreed to keep to short questions and answers, Protagoras continues in a more conversational mode by asking Socrates to react to his interpretation of the poem (339a5). Vindicating his interpretative effort by the claim that "the greatest part of a man's education is to be skilled in the matter of verse" (338e6–339a1), Protagoras explains that Simonides' poem is inconsistent.

> First he [Simonides] laid it down himself that *it is hard for a man to become good in truth* (χαλεπὸν εἶναι ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἀλαθείᾳ), and then a little further on in his poem he forgot, and he proceeds to blame Pittacus for saying the same as he did – *that it is hard to be good* (χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι), and refuses to accept from him the same statement that he made himself. (339d1–6)[27]

Socrates' answer, and his own interpretation of the poem, can be analyzed in three parts.[28] The first (339e–342a) briefly defends the poems' consistency in arguing that it builds on a distinction between being and becoming ("τὸ γενέσθαι καὶ τὸ εἶναι",

[25] The two modes of deception exemplified by Protagoras' and Socrates' "great" speeches, enchantment and diversion, are mentioned at 328d4–5 and 336c4–d2. For discussion, see Benitez (1992, 240).

[26] The poem is reconstructed and translated by Bowra (1961, 326–36). Cf. McCoy (1999, 365n6).

[27] My italics. Translation by Lamb (1967).

[28] So Frede (1986, 739). It is divided differently in McCoy (1999, 352) and Trivigno (2013, 515).

340b5). The second (342a–343c5) concludes with the claim that Simonides' purpose was to undermine the wise Pittacus' authority and gain a reputation of being wise himself (343b–c).[29] The third continues the defense of Simonides. Let us look at a few telling moves in the third part.[30]

One line from the poem is crucial: "*It is hard to be good* (χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι)" (343d4). According to any standard interpretation, Simonides ascribes this line to Pittacus and objects by saying that this cannot be right, because only the gods can be good.[31] The permanent condition of *being good* is not hard to reach, but impossible. Subject to great external forces, a human can only be good for a moment. Identifying the conditions of goodness with something like "wealth, physical attractiveness and power" (McCoy 1999, 351), this means that what decides whether a person is able to be good, or act well, depends on fortune and misfortune.

Another line states the poems' moral conclusion: "*But I praise and love everyone willingly committing no baseness* (πάντας δ᾽ ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω/ἑκὼν ὅστις ἔρδῃ/μηδὲν αἰσχρόν)" (345d3–4). Instead of praising whoever has had the fortune of being able to act in a good way, we should praise the one who does not deliberately try to be bad.

Socrates does not endorse this reading. First, he claims that Simonides does not reproach Pittacus for saying that the conditions of goodness cannot be wealth, physical attractiveness and power, but that Simonides reproaches Pittacus for saying that the conditions of goodness cannot be *knowledge*. Second, this implies that Simonides does not mean to say that we should praise the one who does not do wrong willingly, but that it is knowledge we should praise, and the one who has it. In order to reach this unforeseeable conclusion Socrates' argument goes through several steps. The following are revealing of his purpose.

First, he argues that misfortune cannot influence someone that is already bad, "just as you cannot knock down one who is lying down" (344c7–8). Only someone

[29] This second part has a comic ring. In the light of Socrates' earlier declaration that he wants to converse by means of short questions and answers, and further, with regard to the fact that he was going to answer in an exemplary way (338d), the length of Socrates' speech must to be some kind of joke.

[30] There are many excellent commentaries on Socrates' (and Protagoras') reading of Simonides' poem. See, e.g., McCoy (1999), Trivigno (2013), Frede (1986), and Pappas (1989). My purpose of bringing this up is not to develop a new reading, but only to lay bare how Socrates' interpretation of the poem corresponds to his own critique of interpretation.

[31] In reference to Bowra (1934) and Woodbury (1953), McCoy (1999, 351) argues that most commentators, except Socrates (as we shall see), read the poem along these lines: "Most commentators see Simonides poem as presenting the following view: excellence as traditionally understood (e.g., possessing the traits of wealth, physical attractiveness, and power) is difficult to attain and impossible to keep for long. Because human beings universally act badly in the face of misfortune […] Simonides is willing to […] praise those who do not deliberately (ἑκών) choose to be base (αἰσχρόν)."

who is resourceful (εὐμήχανος, 344d1) can be affected by that type of misfortune Simonides calls *helpless disaster* ("ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ", 344c5).[32]

Second, Socrates investigates what we should take such misfortune or disaster to mean. In analyzing the relevant line in Simonides' poem – "If he has fared (πράξας) well (εὖ), every man is good (ἀγαθός); but bad (κακός), if ill (κακῶς)" (344e7–8) – Socrates uses an example; and asks: What type of faring well (εὐπραγία) makes a doctor good (ἀγαθός, 345a2)? Phrased in negative terms, Socrates answers that the only thing that can make a doctor fair ill is the loss of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, 345b5).

Third, having thus established knowledge as the condition of goodness, Socrates draws the conclusion. Against any standard reading, he argues that Simonides does not conclude that "I praise and love everyone willingly committing no baseness (πάντας δ᾽ ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω/ἑκὼν ὅστις ἕρδῃ/μηδὲν αἰσχρόν)" (345d3–5). Dismissing, in passing, the thought that it is possible to do bad by intent (345d6–345e4), Socrates explains that the *by intent* or *willingly* (ἑκών) does not describe the motivation of the person performing the act, but the motivation of Simonides. Socrates reads the *willingly* (ἑκών) together with the "I praise and love (ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω)".[33] And thus, we learn, the one that Simonides is willing to praise is anyone who does not do bad (ὅστις ἕρδῃ/μηδὲν αἰσχρόν).

Fourth, in the light of Socrates' former arguments, this position is not as uncontroversial as it may seem. Having shown (1) that misfortune can only influence someone with knowledge, (2) that only such a person can ever do any good, and (3) that a permanent state of goodness is impossible for a human, Socrates' conclusion, that those whom Simonides is willing to praise are the-ones-in-between (cf. 346d3: τὰ μέσα), implies that they are persons with knowledge (cf. 346d1–2).[34]

Let us now step back a little and ask what is going on in these passages. What is Socrates doing? Despite the wide range of different interpretations, there is a basic consensus.[35] Socrates is not only "systematically misreading Simonides" (Pappas 1989, 249), but, "at the expense of honest hermeneutics" (McCoy 1999, 355), he "distorts the text" (Trivigno 2013, 520) and "imposes, consciously and forcefully, his own tenets on the poem" (Frede 1986, 740).[36] But how is this possible and what is the point?

First, it is clear that both Protagoras and Socrates exploit the poem. This point is also emphasized by their agreement to play by the same rules. While Protagoras uses the poem to show off his skill in the matter of verse (338e6–339a1, cf, Trivigno

[32] The adjective ἀμήχανος can, according to McCoy (1999, 355), mean both "lacking means" and "being such that no means will do", the latter being used here. Cf. Trivigno (2013, 522).

[33] Cf. Trivigno (2013, 521 and 523) and Pappas (1989, 250).

[34] The type of knowledge at stake here is controversial. It is however beyond the scope of this paper to adjudicate the debate. For discussion, see McCoy (1999), Frede (1986), and Trivigno (2013, 525).

[35] As pointed out by Pappas (1989, 249) and Trivigno (2013, 520).

[36] At a first glance, Frede may seem to oppose this general agreement, arguing that Socrates' reading of Simonides' poem is "basically sound" (737). Later (740) she does however add that this in not supposed to "imply that Socrates really thinks that he is rendering Simonides' own intentions".

2013), Socrates uses it to sanction a set of tenets alien to the poem (Frede 1986, 746; cf. Pappas 1989). As Socrates soon comes to point out, however, this instrumental treatment presumed too much; and was, therefore, dangerous. Their contest of interpretation presupposed that there was a definite and consistent message to be extracted from the poem (339b6–9, cf. McCoy 1999, 353; Trivigno 2013, 516). And accordingly, their contest also assumed that it was possible to extract a message from a medium that, at least according to what Plato makes Socrates say, cannot carry such a load. For although, as Socrates puts it, "many say that the poet means this, and others say that the poet means that", he makes it perfectly clear that this is just because they are "conversing about a matter that they cannot put to the test (διαλεγόμενοι ὃ ἀδυνατοῦσι ἐξελέγξαι)" (347e4–7). Their interpretative contest was presumptuous because it claimed to be able to accomplish what could not be accomplished by means of the established rules.

Whether or not Socrates is right in this, it is at least reasonably clear that Socrates is not only trying to *tell* Hippocrates why intercourse with Protagoras is dangerous, he also wants to *show* him this. When uncared for and exploited, no written text offers any message to be put to the test. But interpretative endeavors such as the ones we are offered make us think otherwise. And this is dangerous, not only because they build on a set of presuppositions that dissociate speaker and voice, but also because they sanction the treatment of the voice as merchandise.

Short Questions and Answers

So far we have seen that Socrates has reason to consider two modes of discourse hazardous. Long speeches are deceptive and interpretation of poetry presumptuous. Accordingly, and as Socrates is often taken to insist, there seems to be only one viable alternative left: short questions and answers. The more conversational parts of the dialogue are also often labeled *dialectical* and taken to be Socrates' preferred mode of discourse.[37] But Socrates' final verdict of his conversation with Protagoras seems to tell otherwise. Despite the fact that the discussion has progressed by asking and answering questions, it has missed its target entirely. Indicative of the purpose of Plato's text, Socrates leaves little room for doubt. The results of the conversation have turned out to be dangerously topsy-turvy (cf. 361c3: "ἄνω κάτω ταραττόμενα δεινῶς") and absurd (ἄτοπος, 361a5). If we take a closer look at some parts of the dialogue that exemplifies the mode of discussion that is at stake here,

[37] E.g. Long (2005, 3), Gonzales (2000, 132f), and Benitiez (1992, 242). Benson (2006) argues that the substantive expression, ἡ διαλεκτική, is not frequent in Plato, while the infinitive is. In the *Protagoras* Socrates repeatedly says that he and Protagoras should try *to converse* (διαλέγεσθαι, e.g. 316c3). This expression (used 32 times) is translate by Notomi (2004, 1) as "engaging in dialogue". The difference between Socrates and Protagoras' use of this terminology is discussed by Burnyeat (2013, 419ff.). See also Benson (2006) and Robinson (1953b).

Socrates' reasons to consider himself entitled to draw this conclusion becomes clearer.

At around 348c5, the dialogue begins to pursue in a more conversational manner. After a short summary of Protagoras' view on the unity of the virtues (349b1–349c5), Socrates asks whether Protagoras has changed his mind. Protagoras answers that although all of the virtues are fairly alike (cf. 349d3–4: "ἐπιεικῶς παραπλήσια ἀλλήλοις ἐστίν") courage is a virtue one can have without the others (349d5–8). In his reply to Protagoras, Socrates poses a series of questions designed to undermine Protagoras' position.

Socrates' first attempt (349e1–350c5) is telling for what shall come. On the assumption that courageous men are bold, and in getting Protagoras to admit that divers and horsemen with knowledge are bolder than those without, Socrates begins by trying to make Protagoras accept the thought that it must be knowledge that distinguishes courage. Since there are men without knowledge who nevertheless are considered to be bold, as Protagoras concedes, Socrates pushes Protagoras into saying that these men must be mad. And since Protagoras cannot allow himself to admit that mad men can be courageous, there is only one alternative left: knowledge. Since (1) courageous men are bold, (2) knowledge decides a man's level of boldness, and (3) mad men cannot be courageous, it seems to follow that knowledge distinguishes courage. And thus, on the assumption that knowledge and wisdom can be equated, Socrates tries to lure Protagoras into admitting that courage is not possible without wisdom.[38] Protagoras is, however, not such an easy prey; and, as we know, he catches Socrates in the act (cf. 350c5-351b2). Protagoras sees that Socrates is trying to deceive him: If one can draw the conclusion that courage is not possible without knowledge from the thought that knowledge conditions courage, he says, it should also be sound to claim that it is not possible to be strong without knowledge. In wrestling, Protagoras points out, someone that knows how to wrestle is clearly more powerful than someone that does not. But even if this is true, and knowledge makes one wrestler more powerful than another, it is nevertheless absurd to conclude that one cannot be strong without knowledge. Even if knowledge may help to make a person bold, courage cannot be knowledge.

At this stage of the discussion, Socrates abruptly breaks the argument off (351b3). Without further comments, he changes the subject. The silence is telling. It is clear that Protagoras is not that easily deceived. Socrates need to be more refined than so-far to get Protagoras where he wants him. Socrates' proceeding argument is also much more sophisticated than the first.

Socrates begins again by trying to make Protagoras accept the thought that to live in pleasure is to live well. Protagoras' unwillingness to agree to this, without qualification, triggers a further argument to the same point. First, Socrates commits Protagoras to the claim that knowledge is the most forceful power (κράτιστος, 352d2) in human action (352c8–d3). And then he goes on to ask whether Protagoras agrees with the opinion of *the many* ("οἱ πολλοὶ", 352d5), that is, insofar as they

[38] Knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and wisdom (σοφία) are often interchangeable, e.g., 352d1–2. So Taylor (1976, 152).

think that it is possible to be overcome by pleasure ("ἥττω εἶναι τῶν ἡδονῶν", 353c2), even if one *knows* that what one is about to do is bad (cf. 353c7: "γιγνώσκοντες ὅτι πονηρά ἐστιν"). Protagoras answers that the many are wrong.[39]

Symptomatic of the argumentative strategy at play, Socrates goes on to ask how badness is to be understood. Arguing that a temporary act of satisfying one' pleasures can result in future pains, Socrates concludes that the many cannot mean that an act is bad (κακός) because it gives temporary pleasure. Instead they must mean that the act is bad because it yields future pains (353d8–e1). Socrates then goes on to show that the principles of this hedonistic calculus must also be valid in the opposite case. And thus, since the many thinks that it is the sum of the pain/pleasure balance that determines the value of an act, they are apparently also committed to the thought that despite temporary pains – such as in gymnastics or war – an act is called good (ἀγαθός), if its future results are pleasant, such as in health or wealth (354b1–5).[40] Protagoras concedes.

The conclusion that Socrates draws from this is the following. The phrase *being overcome by pleasure*, really means *being overcome by the good*; and accordingly it would of course be absurd to claim that "a man does bad […] because he is overcome by the good" (355d1–3). As Protagoras is now forced to admit, the many are confused. And Protagoras agrees that it is reasonable to think that the good is some form of pleasure (356c3).

After a shorter elaboration of this argument in terms of an *art of measurement* (often taken to further establish the connection between the hedonistic calculus and knowledge) Socrates returns to courage and wisdom.[41] By first opening up the argument to objections, but without getting any, Socrates establishes an argumentative consensus to the effect that the good is to be considered to be some form of pleasure (354e8–355a4, cf. 354c3, 354d1–4 and 354b8–c2); and then goes on to ask what makes a man coward. Fear, he proposes, is the expectation of something bad. The proper example, we learn, is war. But since war, as Protagoras certainly thinks, is something honorable (καλόν, 359e5), it appears to be something good. Without questioning this premise, Socrates goes on to say that since the good is taken to be some form of pleasure, war must also be pleasurable. Accordingly, Socrates can also explain why the coward runs away from the battle-field. He is ignorant. Without being able to estimate the proper pain/pleasure-balance, he does not *know* what is to be feared. But the brave one does. He sees the pleasures waiting for him at the battle's end. And, thus, since courage is the opposite of cowardice, courage is wisdom.

[39] On Socrates' use the imaginary interlocutor, see Gonzales (2000) and Moss (2013). Schofield (1992, 134) argues the fictive opponent in invented so as to forge an artificial solidarity between Socrates and Protagoras.

[40] As pointed out by Frede (1992, xxviif), it is not clear what type of hedonism Socrates presupposes here.

[41] For discussion, see McCoy (2008, esp. 57), Brickhouse and Smith (1997), Hackforth (1928), and Irwin (1977).

In the light of what happens in this argument, Socrates' conclusion that his conversation with Protagoras has turned out to be dangerously topsy-turvy may seem to be less strange than at first sight. With regard to Socrates' critique of long speeches and interpretation of poetry, Socrates is clearly aware of the dangers of deception and presumptuousness. Socrates' strategy in this argument is however not much better. There are at least three reasons.

First, the details of Socrates' line of reasoning reveal that his argument was not particularly transparent. Besides the seductive use of an imaginary interlocutor, there are clearly argumentative options that Socrates omits. The fact that bad acts can be traced to ignorance, for example, does not require that courage be the same as wisdom. For even on Socrates' hedonistic calculus, it is still possible that the future pleasures resulting from running away from the battle-field may be greater than the pleasures resulting from staying. There is no necessary connection established between running away and future pains, in the same sense as there is a necessary connection between gluttony and future pains, for example (cf. Moss 2013, 27f.). In addition, the entire argument to the effect that the coward is ignorant is based on a premise that Socrates, just a few pages above, has denied (341b1–c2). With the aid of Prodicus, Socrates made it perfectly clear that war is to be considered something bad (κακός, 341b6), not something honorable (καλόν). Revealing of what is going on in this argument, this is a point that Socrates now remarkably appears to have forgotten.

Second, the deceptive nature of Socrates' words is also apparent in the general form of his argumentative strategy. Although Socrates repeatedly insists on the non-competitive ambition of his questions, there are strong reasons to doubt his sincerity. Besides the fact that he actually manages to win the argument (360d5–e5), Protagoras also admits his lost (cf. 361d4–362a1). The conversation about courage and wisdom has clearly not been any kind of joint search. It has been a competition. And from this point of view, its lack of argumentative transparency is not surprising. Socrates does not try to make all the options and steps of the argument evident, so as to secure that Protagoras understands the deductive moves of the inquiry, because Socrates is not trying to make him follow. He is trying to make him contradict something he has said before. By first probing for Protagoras' level of competence, Socrates goes on to launch an attack that eventually will make his opponent give in.

Third, even if one may be inclined to argue that Socrates' argument is not deceptive, but only lacking, one must take the following points into consideration. Besides the fact that the conclusion Socrates draws regarding courage and wisdom builds on assumptions that he does not allow elsewhere, neither in the *Protagoras* (341b1–c2) nor in other dialogues (e.g. *Gorg*.494e9–497a5, *Rep*.505b5–11 or *Phil*.20e4–21a2), this conclusion is of course also incompatible with the dialogues' aporetic end. If the conclusion that courage is wisdom would have been reached by the proper means, Socrates would have no reasons to doubt its validity. But Socrates makes it perfectly clear that he has. In addition, if Socrates' conversation with Protagoras would have been correctly oriented, one could have expected Socrates to show some awareness of the limitations of their pursuit. Instead of offering a presumptuous account claiming to have established something it did not have the means to estab-

lish, the conversation should have been performed in a discursive mode able to properly asses its own accomplishments. Yet, it is clear that we have nothing of that sort. On the grounds that the question of the quality of virtue was asked before the question of its being was even posed, Socrates says that if they are to investigate the subject matter in a proper way, they will need to start anew (361c4–6).[42] However important a lesson this may be, it seems reasonable to say that Socrates, at least, would not want to describe the conversation in the *Protagoras* to be an example of proper dialectic. But what is it then?

A Sophistical Practice

As Michael Frede has argued, there are two important things to keep in mind. First, the conversation between Socrates and Protagoras in the *Protagoras* cannot be seen in isolation. Rather, it should be understood as an example of a larger *sophistical* practice.[43] The rules are simple. In trying to get the respondent to contradict a formerly given statement, one person asks the questions and the other answers with yes or no. According to Frede "Socrates' mastery of this practice is such that he manages to 'refute' the respondent even where we have some reasons to believe that Socrates actually shared the respondent's view".[44] Second, even if there are reasons to think that the *Protagoras* contains examples of proper Socratic tenets, we cannot be sure, because "Socrates could manage to refute any thesis".[45] According to Frede, there is, however, one thing that we can be more certain about. The conversation in the dialogue is part of a tradition. It is part of a tradition that is supposed to stand in contrast to the one Plato wanted to establish. And if this is correct, Plato certainly had reasons to include also the discursive mode of short questions and answers in the dialogue. In accordance with Socrates' ambition to show Hippocrates the hazards of his trust in discursive proficiency, Plato had reasons to show his readers that there is no guarantee that short questions and answers will put you on the right path. When an inquiry is pursued along the lines of Socrates and Protagoras' conversation, conversation can be just as dangerous as long speeches and interpretation of poetry can be. The briefness of its questions and answers may give the appearance of making all the steps of the investigation transparent. And in pursuing its path by means of agreement or consensus it can give the appearance of being on the right track (*Pace* Long 2005). But, just as in the case of long speeches, these appearances

[42] Politis (2012, 223) puts it accurately: "[I]f they [Socrates and Protagoras] want the inquiry to arrive at a clear, manifest and stable outcome, they must change their line of inquiry". So also Taylor (1976) and Guthrie (1961).

[43] Frede (1992, xvff). Nehamas (1990, 5) agrees, questioning a tradition going back to Sidgwick and Grote.

[44] Frede (1992, xvii). E.g. Protagoras' refuted attempt to reject hedonism. Cf. *Gorg.* 494e9–497a5, *Rep.* 505b5-11 *or Phil.* 20e4–21a2. For discussion, see also Moss (2013).

[45] Frede (1992, xvii).

are deceptive. The conversation may hide its gaps and traps in long and complex arguments that, in retrospect, can be said to be just as presumptuous as interpretation of poetry. Because insofar as Socrates is right in claiming that both his own and Protagoras' contributions were quite out of place (ἄτοπος, 361a5), it is clear that their particular mode of discourse distracted the inquiry from it proper course.

Conclusion: Dangerous Voices

In line with Socrates' initial warning to the young Hippocrates of what may happened when one involves oneself with a sophist, we have seen that Socrates' critique of long speeches, discussion of poetry and short questions and answers are not only possible to understand in terms of their deceitful, presumptuous and distracting characteristics. The dialogue also stages these three modes of discourse in a way that lets us appreciate Socrates' reasons to worry. But this calls for a concluding question: Are the three criticized modes of discourse just random cases, or are they chosen, with care, to emphasize some common problem?

As we saw at the outset of this paper, the three passages were Plato makes Socrates articulates his worries are all phrased in self-critical terms. The target of Socrates' critique of long speeches applies to any form of discourse similar to what may be expressed in a book. His critique of interpretation of poetry applies, in principle, to any form of written word. And Socrates' final evaluation of the accomplishments of his conversation with Protagoras shows all the signs of being a self-critical assessment of the outcome of Plato's text. In all of these passages the written word seems to be the paradigmatic target of critique.

As we have seen, in his critique of long speeches Socrates also emphasizes the difference between what is spoken and what is written. But this difference is carefully qualified. Just as Socrates insists in the *Phaedrus* (e.g. 259e1–6, 275c3–d2, 276a5-6 and 277e5–278b4), the difference between what is spoken and what is written is not always coextensive with voice and text. In the form of public speeches or rhetorical display, the spoken word is liable to the same charges as what may be written in a book. And although Socrates' critique of interpretation of poetry emphasizes the difference between the exercise of you own voice and the act of textual interpretation, Socrates' final evaluation of his discussion with Protagoras, I have argued, shows that a spoken conversation can be just as deceptive as a book, or just as presumptuous as an act of interpretation. Accordingly, it does not seem to be the paper and the ink that is the problem, but some feature of language and discursive interaction that can be represented by a text.

In order to pinpoint what this feature is, Socrates' introductory conversation with Hippocrates is telling.[46] As we have seen, one central point of Socrates' argument here is that Protagoras treats his voice as merchandise. Just as Socrates presumes in

[46] For a lucid discussion on how Socrates' initial conversation with Hippocrates is designed to prepare the reader for what the rest of the dialogue shall offer, see Schofield (1992, 125f.).

his mock interpretation of Simonies' written poem, Protagoras considers his teachings to be products with a message that can change hands without any loss of content. In this light, a text seems to be the perfect paradigm for the results of discursive commodification. Dissociable from its source of origin, just like Protagoras' teachings, it is treated as independent and self-contained. And it has no indispensable link to its originator. But this, of course, is problematic, because as Socrates suggests in his critique of interpretation of poetry, no text can carry such a load. If we want to know what thought the text is designed to capture, we will need to talk to its author. Why? Insofar as we can assume that there are no texts with souls, the reason seems to be clear. Only souls can entertain thoughts. But what does this mean? One suggestion would be that while an ensouled voice can be said to be conditioned by an internal difference that allows it to take itself as an object of thought, a text is simple and one-sided. Self-evident as it may seem, a text does not have access to the internal operations by means of which its expressions have come to be formed, and it cannot see beyond its own position, however subtle and self-critical this may be. But all voices that are treated as texts share this lack. Just as long speeches and premeditated positions, texts are one-directed. They cannot adapt to their counterparts and they cannot choose their words with care of theirs addressees' point of view. They can only speak, not listen. In a more Platonic vocabulary this would mean that a voice that is treated as a text is denied the ability to entertain a dialogue; an ability without which it becomes thoughtless. It cannot nourish and sustain the unassuming conditions of an open-ended investigation. Instead, it can only represent a certain position. And in contrast to a voice that is open to dialogue, a voice that is treated as a text is only open to competition and exploitation.

As we have seen, in the examples of the three distinct modes of discourse that Socrates criticizes in the *Protagoras*, these ideas are confirmed. Not only is it clear that Socrates considers Protagoras' long speech to be an example of a type of discourse that lacks the ability to listen and answer to questions. Socrates' treatment of Simonides poem also shows what is at stake. Exemplified by his exploitation of its words, Socrates outlines the fate of desouled voices. Although they may seem to be able to communicate some important thought, this is just as charade. When distorted or criticized, they cannot continue the discussion by correcting the misunderstandings or admitting their mistakes. Instead they are at the mercy of the interpreter. And the voice of the text can be exploited for whatever end he prefers. Socrates' discussion with Protagoras extends these ideas to a spoken situation. Protagoras is considered to represent a certain preconceived position. And Socrates' exploitation of his voice confirms this view. Although he eventually admits the dangerous and absurd nature of their discursive competition, Socrates' actual treatment of Protagoras in the conversation is quite straightforward. In line with Protagoras' treatment of himself and his teachings, Socrates exploits the position Protagoras considers himself to represent. Indicative of the fact that he does not really think that Protagoras can or is willing to listen, Socrates shows no signs of being ready to tell the sophist his true intensions. Instead he deceives. Phrasing his arguments so as to align them with Protagoras' point of view, Socrates exploits whatever weaknesses he sees in Protagoras' position and uses this to win the game. But as the end of the

dialogue makes clear, this is a failure. As it comes to success in the matter of virtue, the dialogue identifies no winners. And even if one may think that Plato just decided to illustrate this activity so as to warn his readers of the time-wasting effects of intellectual sports, Plato's account of Socrates' warning to Hippocrates suggests that the matter may be more serious. Phrased within the conceit of Plato's fiction, Socrates warns Hippocrates that his very soul is at stake. If one is not careful, we learn, the soul may get poisoned and corrupted by Protagoras' voice, just like bad food can poison and sicken the body. However, as should be reasonably clear by now, Socrates' warning is not confined to Protagoras' voice alone. Instead, it is designed to prepare the reader for what shall come. And as we have seen, the dialogue's account of the hazards of discursive commodification extends far beyond the sophist's teachings. All texts, it seems, and all voices that are treated as texts, share the same problem. By promoting the illusory stability of well-defined and independent positions, they undermine the virtue of a sensitive and attentive mode of discourse. By means of their deceptive charm, long speeches may paralyze the process of unassuming inquiry. By sanctioning the dissociation of voice and soul, interpretation of poetry promotes the presumptuous ideal of self-contained teachings; and conversations that promote the battle of positions replace the search for clarity with deception and trickery. All commodified voices are dangerous in this way. But Plato's text has some unusual features; and it is different from many others voices. By including a critique of the very medium by means of which it operates, it arms its readers with a set of tools that makes it possible to dismantle its deceptive charm. By means of its self-critical vein, or, as one scholar has described it, its internal self-contradiction (Woolf 1999, 28), the *Protagoras* promote thinking at the expense of teaching. Instead of asking us to chisel out its true meaning and live our lives accordingly, Plato's *Protagoras* suggests another alternative. Although stated very brief, the notion of a teaching, used to describe what Protagoras is selling, is contrasted to another type of knowledge. Against the background of Socrates' account of Protagoras' commodification of his voice and the dangers of discursive merchandise, Plato makes Socrates suggest that there is more to learn than teachings. Compared with the expertise of the doctor, Socrates outlines a type of knowledge that seems to be immune to commodification. For in granting its possessor the ability to evaluate what teachings are good and what teachings are bad, it seems to render all such teachings useless. If you already have the capacity to know what is good and bad for the soul, what use are teachings? Revealing of what the rest of the dialogue shall offer, Socrates never answers this question. And he never explains what this type of knowledge amounts to. Both Socrates and Hippocrates, we learn, "are still a little too young to get to the bottom of such a great matter" (314b5–7). And instead they go and talk to Protagoras.

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Visible and Audible Movement in the *Protagoras*

Kristin Sampson

The dialogue *Protagoras* revolves around the great sophist after whom it is named, and his first exchange of words with Socrates. As it will turn out, this debate marks the beginning of a continual discussion that is to pervade the philosophical life of Socrates.[1] The *Protagoras* centres on the art of sophistry. In it Socrates and Protagoras meet and engage in discussion, and for a large part their conversation focuses on their inability to agree even on the way in which to speak to each other.[2] Socrates wants to have a dialogue through short questions and answers, whereas Protagoras argues the importance of being able to make longer speeches.[3] Through these disagreements some differences between the rhetoric of sophistry and the dialectic of philosophy emerge. However, the dialogue also shows the difficulties involved in making the distinction between the two. As Marina McCoy points out (2008, 59) "the contrast here [in the *Protagoras*] between Socratic questioning and

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[1] Lampert (2010) emphasizes this point. As he writes (2010, 20), "Socrates debates Protagoras from the beginning of his career to its end; and in written form the debate is perpetual, stretching out into the future as Socratics debate Protagoreans."

[2] According to McCoy (2008, 59), "Protagoras and Socrates never have a conversation that is satisfying to them both."

[3] See e.g. Long (2011, 361), where he points out how "the discussion between Protagoras and Socrates threatens to break down."

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sophistic rhetoric is not so straightforward."[4] This becomes apparent both in the discussion between Socrates and the great sophist and within the story about their meeting. Sometimes Protagoras sounds quite Socratic, and sets forth arguments that resemble what have been termed Socratic doctrines.[5] At other times Socrates sounds like a combative, rhetorically deft sophist, discoursing in an argumentative way often associated with the rhetorical art the sophists offered to teach.[6] It may be no accident that Plato in the *Protagoras* has Socrates recount how he is mistaken for a sophist by the door-man when he arrives at the house of Callias. This article looks at the manner in which the relation between the sophist and the philosopher is reflected also in the dramaturgy of the *Protagoras*.[7] To this end it will examine some of the transitions that are set in motion from visible to audible movement. It will also attempt to indicate some distinctions that are made within the realm of the audible, and argue that in these distinctions some clues to the difference between sophistry and philosophy may be found. The article claims that these transitions and distinctions are relevant to shedding light upon the difficulties involved in distinguishing easily and clearly between the rhetoric of sophistry and the dialectic of philosophy.

The present article is limited to considering two short passages at the beginning of the *Protagoras*: 309a–310b and 314c–318e. It begins by looking quite closely at the very first word, sentence, paragraph and page of the dialogue, which includes the first words that Socrates speaks. In this connection it also considers the first emergence of the sophist in the *Protagoras*. In looking so closely at the beginning of the dialogue, the aim is to bring out how already here a transition from the visual

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[4] Or, as Bartlett claims (2003, 623): "One might say that the *Protagoras* both diminishes the differences between philosopher and sophist (314d3) and sharpens those that remain." In contrast to McCoy (2008), Benitez (1992) claims, e.g. (1992, 222, 245), that the contrasts between sophistry and philosophy are very clearly exposed in the *Protagoras*. On the other end of the spectrum from Benitez, we find Gagarin (1969) who argues for the fundamental similarities between Socrates and Protagoras. He claims that "their views as stated here are fundamentally the same." Gagarin's thesis (1969, 134) is that "in the *Protagoras* Plato is attempting to establish the basic continuity between Protagorean and Socratic thought, and to show that they agree on the most important matters, *aretê* and *paideia*." My view is neither that of Benitez nor that of Gagarin, but rather closer to that of McCoy, who recognizes both the similarities and the differences between Socrates and Protagoras. As she concludes (1999, 364): "The *Protagoras* […] exhibits the value of dialectic as a philosophical method appropriate to the human state".

[5] Coby (1987, 14 ff.) argues that Protagoras "to a remarkable degree […] is a proponent of this [Socratic] doctrine," and claims that there is a side of Protagoras that is "noticeably akin to Socrates." He describes the similarities point by point over several pages in his book.

[6] As Lampert writes (2010, 34), "Socrates seems indistinguishable from a sophist." He argues, nonetheless, for the superior greatness of Socrates. Still he poses the question: "But in what does Socrates' superior greatness consist?" Coby as well (1987, 18) points out the resemblance between Socrates and the sophist Protagoras: "The competitive, even sophistic nature of Socrates' conversation with Protagoras is one of the dialogue's unmistakable features."

[7] For an overview of the increasing tendency over the past few decades of a "growing sensitivity to the unity of *Protagoras* and its integration of literature and theory" see Lavery (2007, 191).

to the audible, that is, to the movement of words, is put into motion and displayed at the level of the dramatic setting of the conversations that are to take place. Moving to the next passage helping frame the dialogue, which is set at the doorway of Callias house (314c ff.), the aim is to bring out how a similar transition from physical, visible movement and to an audible exchange of words there recurs. Finally the article moves on to consider the first emergence of the sophist Protagoras, and Socrates' portrayal of him in highly musical terms. The article here aims to bring out a differentiation within the audible and musical that in turn sheds light upon both the difference, but also the relation, between sophistry and philosophical dialectic.

The First Word

The very first word that the friend says to Socrates at the beginning of the *Protagoras* is *pothen*. And, as for instance John Sallis emphasizes, the very first word of a Platonic dialogue is something that is worth considering. So let us consider this first word of the *Protagoras* for a moment. The basic meaning of *pothen* is "whence" or "from where".[8] It can be used in relation to place, as in "from where", in the sense "from what place". It can also be used in other regards, for example, in relation to descent or origin, where it means "from what stock, or lineage". To be noticed here, is that there is always an element of movement implied by the word *pothen*, insofar as it indicates that someone or something is coming from, or derives from, somewhere (or something).

In W. R. M. Lamb's English Loeb-translation the first sentence of the dialogue *Protagoras* reads like this: "Where have you been now, Socrates?"[9] In this translation some of the movement suggested by the word *pothen* is lost. To speak of where someone, that is Socrates, has been, places them in a place without (necessarily) evoking the image of a movement from this place in the same sense that the word *pothen* does. If we turn to the translation of R. C. Bartlett, the first sentence reads differently: "From where, Socrates, are you making your appearance?"[10] This translation contains the movement implied in *pothen* to a greater degree than Lamb's does.

[8] See Liddell and Scott (1996) for references to this and all the following references to the senses of the Greek words.

[9] Plato, *Protagoras*, translated by Lamb in *The Loeb Classical Library* (Plato 1990). When not otherwise stated, this is the translation used.

[10] Plato, *Protagoras*, translated by Bartlett (Plato 2004).

The First Sentence

If we extend our investigation from merely considering the first word, *pothen*, and look at the whole of the first sentence of the dialogue, we are confronted with this Greek: πόθεν, ὦ Σώκρατες, φαίνῃ (*pothen*, *ô Sôkrates*, *phainê*).[11] In addition to "*pothen*" and "Socrates", the word in this sentence is *phainê*. The verb *phainê*, from *phainô*, carries a number of different meanings.

The first main meaning of the word *phainô* in the active voice is "to bring to light, cause to appear," where this is meant in a physical sense. It can also signify the act of "uncovering" something, and so can mean "to make known, reveal, disclose." The verb can also be used in the sense "to set forth, expound" and correspond to expressions such as "give light, shine", "come to light, appear." When used in the middle voice, it can be used to signify that something "comes to sight" or even that it "comes into being". There is an element of movement implied by the verb *phainô* as used here that is complementary to the movement suggested by *pothen*. Both indicate the movement by which something, or someone, emerges, appears or comes to light.

Phainô can be used both in a visual sense, "to show forth, display", and also of sound, where it has an auditory meaning: "to make [it, the sound] clear" to the ear. In the first sentence of the *Protagoras* – *pothen*, *ô Sôkrates*, *phainê* – the verb *fainô* is used in the sense of appearing, in a physical sense. Socrates is literally appearing from somewhere, and the friend is asking him from where he is appearing. It is a corporeal appearance that is evoked here. This is something that is visual in character.

The First Paragraph

If we expand our view further, beyond looking at the first word and the first sentence of the dialogue, so as to consider the whole of the first paragraph, (that is, everything the friend says in his first speech to Socrates), the elements of movement and the visual become even more noticeable. As the friend states in the second sentence: "Ah, but of course you have been in chase of Alcibiades and his youthful beauty!"

[11] A number of interpreters have made a point of the first word of the dialogue, and interpreted this in various ways. Lampert puts emphasis on the very first word of the *Protagoras*, but makes a different point, in that he reads *pothen* as leading back to "the Socrates who has already become himself before the Platonic dialogues begin", as he writes (Lampert 2010, 22). Coby, as well, indicates the importance of these first words of the dialogue, and stresses the fact that *phainê* is used five times in the brief exchange at the beginning of the dialogue (Coby 1987, 20–21). He also points to Miller (1974) for more on the importance of the *pothen phainê* at the beginning of the dialogue (p. 19, with note 5). Long also draws attention to the first word – *pothen* – but again has an interpretation that differs from the one proposed here. According to him (Long 2011, 362), the first word of the dialogue "announces a central theme of the dialogue: the proper course of a life […]."

According to the friend, Socrates has been hunting as if among a pack of hounds, pursuing Alcibiades.[12] If there is one thing that characterizes a pack of hounds hunting, it is their ferociously fast movement. This image thus emphasizes the physical movement of Socrates even further. Moreover, what he is hunting, according to the friend, is the beauty of Alcibiades, understood as something seen. It is the beauty of Alcibiades as something seen that Socrates chases like a hound in a pack, according to the friend. This, of course, may very well not be true of Socrates, but it is still a depiction that is written into the opening of the dialogue at this point.

Metaphorically the word *horaô* can be used of mental visions. In this first paragraph, however, it is clear that the friend is alluding to the visible, physical beauty of Alcibiades. In the next sentence he explains how he still finds him "handsome as a man", even with "quite a growth of beard." Several of the words used allude to something visual: *idonti* from *eidon*, which, as functionally the past tense of *horaô*, means "saw" and, again, the middle voice of *phainô* is employed. Alcibiades appeared (*ephaineto*) to be a beautiful man to the friend. Again there is an element of movement in the appearance of the visual here that at least the English translation of Lamb fails to capture: "I still thought him handsome as a man". One might, instead, translate with several others, "Alcibiades appeared (*ephaineto*) to me to be a beautiful man." This makes it clearer that he emerges, shines forth, appears, as beautiful, visually. Moreover, this is something that happens.

We have so far focused on the visual movement of emergence. Another question worth considering in this connection is *what* emerges in this visible movement. First it is Socrates that emerges from somewhere so as to be seen, by the friend, after which the friend explains how the beauty of Alcibiades appears to him. There are several aspects of this emergence that echo another of Plato's dialogues, namely the *Symposium*.

Both the theme of beauty and the presence of Alcibiades recall the *Symposium*. In this dialogue love is described as the desire for beauty, first corporeal, visible beauty, and then of the non-visible beauty of the beautiful soul, before finally the true lover may learn to appreciate the beauty of beauty itself. With the entrance of Alcibiades at the end of the *Symposium* the internal, psychic beauty of Socrates emerges in the depiction Alcibiades gives of him in his speech. In his erotic desire for wisdom Socrates emerges as the one truly beautiful and desirable. In the opening of the *Protagoras* some of these same elements are present. Socrates appears specifically as a lover apparently in pursuit of the visible beauty of Alcibiades, but this, as in the *Symposium*, is a description that will soon be modified.

[12] This point is not affected by whether or not this opinion expressed by the friend holds true. The fact remains that Plato as the author has written this sentence into his dialogue, where the choice of words creates a certain effect.

The First Page (with the First Words of Socrates)

With the introduction of Socrates into the opening conversation in the *Protagoras* the portrayal of Alcibiades is quickly shifted away from his visible appearance and toward his action, or, to be precise, to his speaking. We have now moved from the first paragraph, to consider the first page, with the first few exchanges between Socrates and his friend. At 309b, where Socrates describes his encounter with Alcibiades that day, he mentions how Alcibiades "spoke a good deal" on his behalf, supporting him "in a discussion". This constitutes a move away from things visible and towards words and discussion, i.e. toward something audible. It is also a move away from depicting something merely corporeal, toward indicating something that is an expression of something internal, such as the character or the soul. This can once again be read as reminiscent of the *Symposium* and the ascent there described toward the beautiful itself.

Socrates proceeds to recount "a strange (*atopon*) thing": although Alcibiades was present, Socrates not merely paid him no attention, but at times forgot him altogether (*Protagoras* 309b). Once more the reader can easily be reminded of the speech of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, where Alcibiades narrates how he ended up being the one trying to catch Socrates' attention, and failing to do so. The reason Socrates in the *Protagoras* forgets about Alcibiades is the presence of what is called, (although perhaps not without a certain amount of irony), a far greater beauty (*Protagoras* 309c). This far greater beauty, that outshines the physical beauty of Alcibiades, turns out to rest in Protagoras, who is first mentioned by name at 310a.

The Emergence of the Sophist

At *Protagoras* 309c Socrates replies in response to the astonishment expressed by his friend, with this question (in Lamb's translation): "Why, my good sir, must not the wisest appear more beautiful?" In Greek it reads like this: πῶς δ᾽ οὐ μέλλει, ὦ μακάριε, τὸ σοφώτατον κάλλιον φαίνεσθαι; The word used is once again the middle voice of *phainô*. Socrates thus asks whether the wisest (*sophôtaton*), or as we might say, "the most sophistic" must not appear, or emerge (*phainesthai*) as the most beautiful (*kallion*). It is the emergence or appearance of the most wise, literally the most sophistic (*sophôtaton*), as the most beautiful that is made subject to question. And this will turn out to be what the *Protagoras* revolves around. What is the relation between wisdom, the sophist and beauty? Is the greatest sophist truly the wisest? And, will the greatest sophist emerge as the most truly beautiful?

Talking and Listening

At the beginning of the dialogue bearing his name, Protagoras, known as the greatest sophist, manages, at least as it appears, to draw the attention of Socrates away from the physical – and visible – beauty of Alcibiades. This is also a move away from visual beauty and toward the exchange of words. It is a move to the activity of speech and listening. Socrates states this explicitly at *Protagoras* 310a: "a great deal I said to him and he to me." In Greek the words used are even clearer in stating that a lot of *talking* and *listening* occurred: πολλὰ καὶ εἰπὼν καὶ ἀκούσας. Such an exchange of words, with a lot of talking and listening, involves a movement of words being sent back and forth between those who are speaking and listening. Instead of the visible movement of emergence, an audible movement of dialectical conversation is now evoked.

According to Laurence Lampert (2010, 27), the explanation Socrates gives his questioner here at the beginning of the dialogue for forgetting Alcibiades "does not hold up." The reason Lampert gives for this is that Socrates in his exchange of words with Hippocrates, earlier before dawn that same day, "tells Hippocrates that he does not think Protagoras is wise." Contrary to Lampert, however, the transition depicted at the beginning of the dialogue, from the visible, physical beauty of Alcibiades does not move toward the wisdom of Protagoras as such. It is, more precisely, a transition away from the attraction of beauty as ordinarily conceived toward the exchange of words. This move away from a focus on the beauty of Alcibiades and to the exchange of words, is thus also a move from the visible to the audible. The central question is thus not "how the wisdom of the wisest can be more beautiful than Alcibiades" (Lampert 2010, 28). Rather, it concerns the allure that dialectical conversation holds for Socrates.

This move toward an exchange of words is also reflected in the outer story of the *Protagoras*. Immediately after Socrates has stated that a lot of talking and listening went on between himself and Protagoras, the friend asks to hear the account of the conversation. That is to say, there is to be a conversation about a conversation. An exchange of words is going to take place, itself disclosing another exchange of words, echoing the speaking and listening that happened just before at the house of Callias.

The connection between speaking and listening is emphasized not only implicitly by this redoubling itself, but also quite explicitly. Socrates states that he will be obliged if the friend and the others that are present will listen to him (*ean akouête*), and the friend replies that they will be obliged to Socrates if he will tell them (*ean legês*). Socrates even calls this "a twofold obligation" (*Protagoras* 310a). The reciprocity that is involved here could be made even more apparent. Barrett's translation is: "The gratitude would be double." The word used, that is translated as "obligation" and "gratitude" in these English versions, is *charis*, which can mean both "grace", "favour" and "gratitude". What Socrates says will be mutual is at the same time the favour conferred and the gratitude felt for it. Furthermore, the exchange of words is disclosed as inherently relational. The listener and the one talking both

need each other in this exchange, and they are both obligated to each other. The grace – *hê charis* – is twofold (*diplê*). It requires two.

This inherently relational aspect of conversation emphasizes the importance of what we may term the in-between. Without an intermediate opening between (at least) two there can be no exchange of words. The interchange of words would stop if no one listened, and it would stop if no one talked. Both are needed in order to keep the movement of words alive.

If we turn back to the very first word of the dialogue once again – *pothen* – one might argue that even in this expression meaning "whence" or "from where" something relational is involved. In order for something to move from somewhere, a space needs to be opened up. This also in a sense constitutes an interval, something intermediary between a here and a there. If there was no intermediate space – no interval – the movement from somewhere would be impossible. One could say that the intermediate space implied in words such as *pothen* is a condition for the movement and emergence of corporeal, visual entities, such as Socrates. In the very first word of the dialogue a notion is introduced not only of movement, but also of the interval that makes movement possible.

By considering these first two pages of the *Protagoras* fairly closely, we see how notions or themes of movement, the interval in-between, and the relational are introduced and developed in the dialogue from the very beginning. This is accomplished both by evoking a visible form of emergence and appearance and via allusions to audible events connected to the exchange of words.

Let us now take a brief look at some recurrences of these themes a little further on in the *Protagoras*, in order to illustrate how they unfold also in the meeting and the conversation between Socrates and Protagoras. In moving forward, our first stop will be at the doorway of Callias' house.

At the Doorway of Callias' House (314c)

At *Protagoras* 314c we learn how Socrates, together with Hippocrates, set out to and arrive at the doorway of Callias' house. Having reached their destination they remain standing outside "discussing (*dielegometha*) some question (*logou*) or other that had occurred to [them] by the way," as Socrates recounts. Again, as in the opening of the dialogue, a transition occurs from physical movement to an exchange of words. At the beginning of the *Protagoras* Socrates emerges from somewhere, which turns out to be the house of Callias. Here at 314c, at the doorstep of the house of Callias, both he and Hippocrates appear from the house of Socrates. Having emerged at the doorway of Callias' house Hippocrates and Socrates stop their physical, visible movement, and keep on moving their words about, between them. Once more we are offered a description of a change from a visible corporeal passage to an audible exchange of words. Neither in the beginning of the dialogue nor here is much attention given to describing the physical movement between the various

locations. It is the transition from this physical movement itself to movement of another kind, namely the one involved in the exchange of words, that is portrayed.

The term translated "we were discussing" at 314c is (*dielegometha*), from *dialegô*, which refers to the act of conversing. It is thus the subject matter of the art of dialectic, that is here put into play. The word translated "question" is *logos*, a cognate noun that can mean "speech", "account", or "argument", among other things. The exchange and movement of words is thus named in a way that quite literally evokes dialectic, the art of conversation, at this point.

After this brief stop at the doorway, we may proceed to step inside the house of Callias.

Choreography and Chant (314e–315b)

At *Protagoras* 314e, Socrates says: "when we had entered, we came upon Protagoras as he was walking round in the cloister, and close behind him two companies were walking round also." Socrates proceeds to describe the dancelike movements and choreography of the circumambulatory (peripatetic) Protagoras and his two companies. Even some of the native inhabitants of Athens (*tôn epichôriôn*) were "dancing attendance," as Lamb renders. A somewhat more literal translation could be that they too were "a part of the dance (*en tô chorô*)" (315b). *Choros* literally means dance or chorus, and a "chorus" was primarily a group of dancers who also sang. "As for me," Socrates says:

> when I saw their evolutions I was delighted with the admirable care they took not to hinder Protagoras at any moment by getting in front; but whenever the master turned about and those with him, it was fine to see the orderly manner in which his train of listeners split up into two parties on this side and on that, and wheeling round formed up again each time in his rear most admirably. (*Protagoras* 315b)

The allusions to theatrical practice are obvious, as several commentators have indicated.[13] In this choreographically depicted dancelike walk, the participants are both moving about and talking. More precisely, Protagoras is talking while the others are listening. However, the speech of Protagoras is painted in musical terms and described as enchanting his listeners. As Socrates says of Protagoras (at 315a–b), he is "enchanting them with his words (κηλῶν τῇ φωνῇ) like Orpheus, while they follow where the voice sounds, enchanted (οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν ἕπονται κεκηλημένοι)." The audible, musical aspect of Protagoras' speech could be stressed even more than this English translation manages. The Greek expression that is translated "enchanting them with his words" is *kêlôn tê phônê. Kêlôn* is from *kêleô*, which means to "charm, bewitch, or beguile" especially via musical means. It can also be used to signify "charm by incantation". Thus it is the audible, musically enchanting sound

[13] For example Tore Frost in his introduction to the Norwegian translation states this explicitly: Protagoras is described, as he writes, "som en vandrende korfører med et haleheng av disipler som kormedlemmer og som med trippende dansetrinn holder de to rekkene intakt." (Frost 1999, 78).

of Protagoras' voice that is stressed in this description, not the content of his words. The Greek word that Lamb translates "words" in the expression "enchanting them with his words" is not *logos* but *phônê*, which means "sound", or "tone," properly "the sound of the voice," whether of men or animals with lungs and throat. These two words – *kêleô* and *phônê* – are even repeated in the same sentence when Socrates continues his description saying that "they follow where the voice sounds, enchanted (οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν ἕπονται κεκηλημένοι)." All this underlines the auditory, musical effect of the speech of Protagoras. Comparing him to Orpheus strengthens this even further. Orpheus, the son of the muse Calliope, was of course famous for his musical talent. The lyre was his instrument and his song was said to enchant everyone and everything, even wild animals, rivers, stones and trees. It is a dancing and singing Protagoras that Socrates makes manifest, or conjures up, through his words. What Protagoras performs is a musical form of movement, both visibly, as dance, and audibly, as chant.

A stress on the audible features of the sophists in the depictions of them gathered at the house of Callias recurs in the description of Prodicus' voice. Only the booming sound of his voice is reported. Prodicus cannot be seen, only heard, but it is merely the rumbling sound of his voice that is heard: no words or meaning can be discerned by those standing outside in the portico.[14]

Sitting Down to Exchange Words (317d)

Shortly after Socrates and Hippocrates have entered the house, Alcibiades also enters, close on their heels, as we are told at *Protagoras* 316a. Socrates calls him "the good-looking" (*ho kalos*), as Lamb renders it, and states outright that he agrees that he is beautiful. This echoes several of the elements in the first paragraph of the dialogue. Once again the same description of the relation between Socrates and Alcibiades that is indicated both at the beginning of the *Protagoras*, and made explicit in the *Symposium*, is touched upon. Even though Alcibiades is the visually beautiful younger man, and the one we would expect the older, uglier man to pursue, the relation is reversed: Socrates forgets about Alcibiades (as we have seen earlier) and Alcibiades here appears as almost chasing Socrates, entering close on his heels. This repeated mention of the beauty of Alcibiades, and display of the reversed relation between them, underlines the transference of Socrates' attention away from physical beauty and toward "our conversation (*dialegêsthe*)", as he says at 317d.

At *Protagoras* 317d we hear how the present company decides, at the proposal of the host Callias, to sit down "at ease for [their] conversation". As Socrates says:

[14] Griswold (1999) focuses on the significance of the voice in the *Protagoras*, but in a different way. Where he examines the voice as an expression of something inner, some meaning or self, we may instead focus on the mere sonority of the voice in the depictions of Protagoras and Prodicus at this point.

"The proposal was accepted; and all of us, delighted at the prospect of listening to wise men, took hold of the benches and couches ourselves and arranged them where Hippias was, since the benches were there already." Once again a change from one form of movement to another is described. Instead of moving about choreographically in a dancelike movement around the cloister, moving to the chant of Protagoras' voice, they are going to sit down and have a conversation (*dialegesthai*). This involves a movement of words that differs both from the visual movement of the dance and the audible movement of the song of Protagoras. Both the latter, the dance and song, are described in musical terms. And, even if Socrates in another dialogue has spoken of philosophy as the highest form of music, this is not music in the same sense as song and dance are musical.

So far we are presented in the *Protagoras*, with a move away both from Alcibiades' physical appearance of beauty and from the beautiful movement of the dance. Both these belong to the realm of the physical and visible. Then we have song and dialectic that both, in so far as the exchange of words is understood as audible conversation (involving speech and listening), can be said to belong to the audible realm. The emphasis that Socrates has put upon the necessity of speaking and listening, both involved in conversation, makes it reasonable to understand dialectic, at least at this point, as audible in this way. Within the realm of the audible there is, furthermore, a move away from the musical enchantment of song and to the dialectic of *logos*. There is thus both a move away from the visible and to the audible, but also a differentiation within the audible as expressed in the change away from chanting to conversation.

The argument of this article is that the discussions of the *Protagoras* are embedded within a relief where the distinction between the visible and the audible plays a part, and where also different kinds of movement and emergence are put into play. So far we have focused mainly on what takes place at what could be termed the dramaturgical level of the dialogue *Protagoras*. We may now, approaching the end of this article, consider in addition one example from the discussion between Socrates and Protagoras, in what could be called the argumentative part of the *Protagoras*, in order to see whether a similar aspect can be said to resonate within the content of what is said. We may again look to the beginning, and take the example that is introduced at the opening of the discussion between Socrates and Protagoras.

The Conversation Commences (317e–318d)

At *Protagoras* 317e, when they had all taken their seats, as Socrates says, the conversation between Protagoras and Socrates begins. Socrates wants to know what result and benefit his friend Hippocrates can derive from Protagoras (318a). Protagoras' answer, that the youth will "constantly improve more and more" (318b) does not satisfy Socrates. He proceeds to offer two examples to Protagoras, to illustrate what he is after. The first is Zeuxippos of Heraclea, a painter who could make

one better at painting. The second is Orthagoras of Thebes, a flute-player who could make one better at playing the flute. Socrates accordingly asks what the great sophist Protagoras would make one better at. At the very beginning of the conversation between himself and Protagoras Socrates chooses to compare the sophist to a painter and a flute-player.[15] The first of these two artists makes visible productions, the second produces music, an audible artistic product. The painter makes images emerge or appear before the eyes of his viewers, and the flute-player emits music to the ears of his listener. Once again the motions of the visible and the audible are placed before us, this time in explicit reference to the question of the art of the sophist.

We may leave the question of what the sophist might make one better at open and unanswered. This article will instead end on another note, by raising a question concerning what we may term the dialectic of writing.

The Dialectic of Writing

The *Protagoras* is a written representation of visible appearances and audible conversations.[16] But what emerges in what may be called the dialectic of writing? What is it that a Platonic dialogue sets in motion? Written words can be seen or heard. Writing illustrates how the motion of dialectic, understood as an exchange of words, is not dependent upon either the visible or the audible in the same way as, for instance, painting or flute-playing are. The beauty appearing in a painting belongs inherently to the realm of the visible, and the enchantment of song and flute-playing belongs intrinsically to that of the audible. The same is not true of the motion of words. One is not dependent upon either the faculty of sight or that of hearing in order to partake of the dialectic of words. That does not, however, mean that the motion of words is completely distanced from the visible and the audible realms. The aesthetics of both visible emergence and audible sounds can contribute to a motion along a dialectical path.

The dialectic of writing emerges as dependent upon neither the visible nor audible, but also in a sense connected to both, even if they do not appear to be of equal significance for it. As the exchange of words emerges through the unfolding of the *Protagoras*, it appears to be closer to the audible than the visible. Furthermore, the thinking that is evoked by words that are heard or read can be described as an internal conversation, and Socrates, as we know, speaks of a *daimonion* speaking to him (e.g. *Euthyphro* 3b, *Apology* 27c–d) and also of a dream telling him to make music

[15] Once again there is an allusion to the *Symposium* here, where the flute-player is at first sent away (*Symposium* 176e), and then another arrives together with Alcibiades at the end of the dialogue (*Symposium* 212d).

[16] For a discussion of the difference between Plato's writing and Socrates' exchange of words in the *Protagoras*, see e.g. Berger (1984), where he argues that "Plato's writing critically differentiates its textual 'method' from that of Socratic conversation" (Berger 1984, 66).

and work at it (*Phaedo* 60e). At least at a metaphorical level it is the audible that is evoked here. Characteristically, Socrates never speaks of philosophy as the highest form of painting, similarly to the way he names philosophy the highest form of music (*Phaedo* 61a).[17] Nonetheless, in the *Protagoras* the dialectical discussions of the sophist is placed into a relief of both visual and audible images and allusions. A number of transitions and displacements are displayed, away from visual beauty and motion, but also away from the audible enchantment of sound and song.

And yet again, as is the case in both the visible and audible allusions, also in the exchange of words some form of motion is put into play. This motion in turn depends upon an in-between. The dialectical emerges as inherently dependent upon a relational intermediary. And in turn, the dialectical movement of words contains the possibility of making new movement in our thoughts and thereby further our understanding and thinking.

Emergence requires that something appears from somewhere. From where – *pothen* – does thinking emerge? Perhaps the transitions from the visible and audible and to the dialectical exchange of words that are made apparent from the very beginning of the *Protagoras* point to the "whence" (*pothen*) thinking emerges. Love of corporeal beauty, and delight in the choreography of dance and enchantment in listening to a lovely voice may be something to leave behind in favour of the dialectical exchange of words that promotes thinking. Yet, they may also constitute the relational movements from whence – *pothen* – thinking emerges.

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[17] Music (*mousikê*), even in its wide meaning, does not, as I argue, include the visible (plastic) arts, such as painting.

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Why Did Protagoras Use Poetry in Education?

Paul Woodruff

Like Plato, Protagoras held that young children learn virtue from fine examples in poetry.[1] Unlike Plato, Protagoras taught adults by correcting the diction of poets. In this paper I ask what his standard of correctness might be, and what benefit he intended his students to take from exercises in correction.[2] If his standard of correctness is truth, then he may intend his students to learn by questioning the content of poems; that would be suggestive of Plato's program in *Republic* III. But his standard is more likely to be the accurate use of language; in that case he would intend his students to learn to express their thoughts clearly enough that their audience would understand what they were saying. That standard would be independent of the truth of what they are saying; and that would be a precursor to modern techniques by which we try to teach speaking and writing. Truth is not so easy to escape, however, and we shall see that Protagoras' exercise must assume that the poet is trying to tell the truth.

Early in the *Protagoras*, the Protagoras tells us that he teaches *euboulia*, which (he claims) is sufficient for effectiveness in both speech and action. I have argued elsewhere that *euboulia* depends on the ability to see both sides of an issue that needs to be decided (Woodruff 2013). In this paper I will explore Protagoras' commitment to the use of clear, literal prose, which he evidently teaches through criticism of poetic language. Like Plato, he is critical of poetry, but, unlike Plato, he directs his criticism at poetic style, rather than content. He drills his students to take poetic devices out of poetry, expecting that this exercise will train them to keep poetic devices out of their prose.

[1] This paper is based on material from my unpublished book ms., *Plato and Protagoras*.

[2] Thanks for comments by Rachana Kamtekar and Hallvard Fossheim.

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Learning Directly from Poetry

> The teachers do care about those things too; and when the children have learned letters and are ready to understand what's written, as earlier in the case of what's spoken, they put works of good poets before them to read at their benches, and require them to learn them by heart. In these works there is a lot of advice, and many stories and songs in praise of good men of old, so that the child will eagerly imitate them, and strive to become like them. The cithara teachers do much the same; they are concerned with sound-mindedness, and [take care] that the youngsters not do badly. And besides that, when they've learned the cithara, they teach them other poems of good poets, lyric poets. And fitting the poems to lyre-playing,[3] they require that their rhythms and harmonies be at home in the souls of the children, so that they should be more gentle too, and so that by acquiring better rhythm and better harmony they should be useful in speech and action; for every human life needs good rhythm and good harmony. (*Protagoras* 325e1–326b6)

This passage, from the *logos* section of what we call Protagoras' great speech, is strikingly similar in content to Plato's educational program in the *Republic*. Although the *mythos* section bears marks of authenticity, we have no reason to think that the *logos* is a direct quotation from Protagoras. I would classify it as imitation, rather than as fragment or testimony. Nevertheless, the views expressed in it are plausibly those of the historical Protagoras. In any case, since the speech belongs to the Protagoras of Plato's dialogue, we should consider whether it sheds light on what he says about teaching through poetry later in the dialogue. Here, Protagoras says, the teachers use only good poems, which have been set to music that is good. Students learn from ethical advice (πολλαί νουθετήσεις), as well as from the examples of the good men of old (326a1–2). In addition, their souls are conditioned in healthy ways by appropriate rhythms and melodies.

On the use of poetry and music in early childhood education, Protagoras is in remarkable agreement with Plato in the *Republic*.[4] The passage allows that his standard of goodness in poetry and music is the similar to Plato's, but sheds no light on what Protagoras understands by "correctness." For that we need to turn to higher education.

Higher Education in Poetry

In the education of older students, Protagoras takes a different tack, towards critical attention to the language of poetry:

> [PROT] "It is my view, Socrates," he said, "that the greatest part of education for a man is to be wonderfully clever about verses (περὶ ἐπῶν δεινὸν); by that I mean being able to grasp

[3] See Adam and Adam (1921, in loc).

[4] Aristoxenus reports that almost the entire *Republic* was written in the *Antilogikoi* of Protagoras (Diogenes Laertius, on Plato, 3.37). [Aristoxenus was a fourth century philosopher and music theorist who studied in Athens.]

> which of the things said by poets is composed correctly, and which is not, and to know how to distinguish them, and to give a reason (λόγον δοῦναι) when questioned." (338e6–339a3)

At 339A4–339D9, Protagoras gives the first part of an example. He diagnoses an inconsistency in a poem of Simonides wherein, Protagoras says, the poet:

(a) Asserts that it is difficult to become a truly good man, *and*
(b) Disagrees with Pittacus for saying that it is difficult to be noble.

He concludes:

> Do you think a poem is finely made if the poet says things opposite (ἐναντία) to what he says himself? (339b9) … and so in faulting a person for saying just what he says, it's clear that he faults himself as well, with the result that he spoke incorrectly either earlier or later. (339d7–9)

Again, we have no reason to think these lines are direct quotations from the historical Protagoras. Still, there is no reason internal to the dialogue for Plato to have supplied such details of Protagoras' program by his own invention. A program there must have been, and the dialogue does need something for Socrates to interrupt, but why this program? Most likely the sentence is a quotation or close paraphrase from Protagoras' well-known prospectus (cf. 326e5–b6). And indeed we will see that there is a fair amount of evidence that Protagoras did teach students to supply corrections (*epanorthomata*) for poets who, he thought, had gone wrong.

The context shows that Protagoras' interest is more in developing the critical faculty than "in the understanding and appreciation of poetry as an end in itself," as CCW Taylor points out (1976: 141). Protagoras wants his students to diagnose correct and incorrect composition in poetry.

But what is it in Protagoras' eyes to speak incorrectly? We know that Protagoras taught both Correctness of Words (τὴν ὀρθότητα περὶ τῶν τοιούτων, *Cratylus* 391c3) and a certain Correctness of Diction (ὀρθοέπειά τις, *Phaedrus* 267c); but we have little evidence in those texts for what these expressions could have meant. The present passage is suggestive, in indicating the sort of question Protagoras raised about poetry. The best evidence we have in Plato is Socrates' answer, which appears to be a parody of the sort of answer Protagoras would give (though the answer Socrates gives is one Protagoras rightly rejects). In general, when Socrates tells one of his partners something that he—Socrates—is unlikely to have believed, I propose as an interpretive strategy to take Socrates' remarks as representing what he thinks follows from his partner's statements or method.

The correctness at issue here is not merely a matter of usage, for Protagoras accuses the poet of making opposite statements. In itself, this is evidently a fault; but Protagoras goes further: the result, he says, is that one or other of Simonides' opposite statements is not correct (339d7–9). This inference, that one of two opposed statements is incorrect, would follow on either of two interpretations:

> First, if "incorrect" is taken to mean "false," and opposition is understood as truth-functional contradiction, then exactly one of the verses must be false.

> Second, if "incorrect" means "not accurately representing the poet's meaning," and if the poet's meaning is consistent, then one or the other of the statements would not accurately represent the poet's meaning.

Note that these two interpretations are not exclusive. Socrates on two occasions aims to work out a more accurate account of a speaker's meaning with reference to what he thinks it would have been true for the speaker to say (below, note 20).

Logical Contradiction

Could Protagoras mean that Simonides contradicts himself, so that one of his verses must be false? That result would be surprising in view of interpretations of Protagoras' views on logic and belief that are based on Plato's own testimony in other dialogues.[5]

(i) It would clash with the Platonic tradition that Protagoras denied the possibility of contradiction: if contradiction were impossible, then Simonides could not have contradicted himself (*Euthydemus* 286b6).
(ii) It seems at odds with the Platonic evidence that Protagoras thought no one ever holds a false belief (*Theaetetus*; see also *Euthydemus* 286a2–3[6]): by that doctrine, Simonides cannot have stated a false view at either point in his poem.

If the present passage meant that Protagoras found Simonides guilty of false belief on the grounds that the poet contradicted himself, and if the Platonic tradition were true about Protagoras—if Protagoras consistently held that contradiction was impossible and that no one holds false beliefs—then we would have to conclude that the present passage is pure invention on Plato's part.

But the present passage is unlikely to be invention. Plato might have composed it as a bit of comedy to show Protagoras fatuously contradicting his famous doctrines. But why not then have him use the language of true and false? Protagoras avoids that here carefully, using instead "fine", "correct" (καλός, ὀρθός) and their negatives. The result is that his language precisely recalls his famous doctrines of the Correctness of Words and of Diction (see below). Had Plato wanted to make Protagoras look foolish in this way, he would have had him declare Simonides' sentiments false. But this Plato does not do; nor does he give any other sign that he finds Protagoras inconsistent on this point. Plato might have concluded that Protagoras in fact held inconsistent views—that the homomensura undermined his teaching on the Correctness of Words. If so, however, the present passage would not be fiction.

[5] In my larger unpublished work on Protagoras, I have argued that Plato is wrong on both points. See below, notes 7 and 8.

[6] The interpretation of this passage (τὸ γὰρ μὴ ὂν οὐδεὶς ἐφάνη λέγων) is vexed; I take it to mean that no one *means* to say something false.

Inaccurate Expression

There are other ways out. I do not think the passage conflicts with what we actually know about Protagoras. In the first place, the tradition that Protagoras denied the possibility of contradiction is evidently false.[7] In the second, to say there is no false opinion is not to say there is no false speaking. Protagoras concludes at 339d that one of Simonides' verses is incorrectly said. That does not have to entail that the verse expresses a false view—that it means what is not the case. In the context Protagoras probably means that Simonides had expressed his meaning inaccurately, whether it was true or not.

Suppose Protagoras considered all of Simonides' beliefs to be either true or false, although Protagoras realized that these two verses logically contradicted each other; then at least one of the verses would not express Simonides' beliefs correctly. That would be the point of Protagoras' criticism: speech is incorrect when it misrepresents the speaker's views. Internal contradiction is a symptom of this sort of failure.[8]

Suppose, on the other hand, that Protagoras was a relativist and held that Simonides' beliefs were neither true nor false, but true-for-him (whatever we take that to mean).[9] Then the poet would be making two mistakes. First, he would be wrong to suppose that he disagrees with Pittacus; no one really disagrees with anyone, since each person's claims are true only for that person. Second, and more important, Simonides would have failed to make his point clear to his audience. What DOES Simonides really think about the difficulty of being good? We can't tell.[10]

Indeed, on either view of truth, Simonides has failed to make his point clear to his audiences, ancient and modern. If you cannot make your point clear, then you will not persuade anyone; if rhetoric is the art of persuasion, you will have failed at

[7] The argument for this is based on a careful reading of the text at *Euthydemus* 286a–c. The speakers do not attribute the point about contradiction directly to Protagoras; they *infer* it from the teaching they have heard, from Protagorean circles, that no one says what is not [the case]. Later writers who attribute to Protagoras the teaching that it is impossible to contradict are plainly following Plato.

[8] Protagoras' theory would still present difficulties: Simonides' implicit belief that his verses are correct would have to be false; and this result would not seem to square with the unrestricted homomensura. A natural escape from this difficulty is to invoke a theory that limits "belief" to attitudes about the way things are, and excludes attitudes about the way things are said. But the evidence that Protagoras actually taught what is reported in *Euthydemus 286* is slender. This may well be an inference from Plato's interpretation of the homomensura.

[9] Burnyeat (1976) interprets Protagoras as a relativist—or at least makes a good case that Plato presents him as a relativist in the *Theaetetus*. In my unpublished ms. I came to the conclusions that (a) we cannot know what Protagoras meant by the homomensura sentence, owing to the lack of context, and (b) whatever it meant, Protagoras cannot have been the sort of relativist Plato show us in the *Theaetetus*.

[10] I am grateful to Rachana Kamtekar for the suggestion about relativism.

rhetoric.[11] Even apparent inconsistency is a failure of rhetoric. Speakers cannot hope to sway an audience if they leave their audience in a state of confusion as to their meaning. At a minimum, Protagoras promises to teach success in public speaking; success may mean many different things, but it appears that no success of any kind will attend speakers who obfuscate their meanings with internal contradictions.[12]

Protagoras on Correctness

Before going further, we need to review the evidence for Protagoras' views on correctness.

Orthoepeia (Correctness of Poetic Diction)

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates gave an account of rhetoric that struck Phaedrus as incomplete, because it left out familiar subjects taught as central to the art of words. So Socrates asked what he had omitted of the parts of rhetoric as it was taught (266d), and proceeds to list the contributions of the major teachers. Protagoras's teaching comes in surprisingly late, after that of Theodorus, Evenus, Tisias, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias, and Polus. None of this teaching, Socrates will say, belongs to the true professional knowledge (*techne*) of rhetoric; at best it comprises pre-rhetorical training (269b).

> SOC: What shall we say of Polus' *Muses*' *Elements of Speaking*, such as doublespeaking, wisdomspeaking, and imagespeaking—words from Licymnius,[13] which he gave to him [Polus] for making Finespeech?[14]

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[11] But see Gagarin (2000). We have good reason to doubt the premise that the art Protagoras taught had persuasion as its aim.

[12] I am grateful to Hallvard Fossheim for emphasizing the importance of success. In defense of the poets, we should note that obfuscation of this kind represents a success in some contexts. A famous modern poem, Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," contains a contradiction: was the road he chose really "less traveled by" or was it "worn about the same?" It cannot be both, but the poet says both, and that is how he rescues the poem from banality.

[13] Licymnius of Chios (267c2) was a dithyrambic poet and rhetorician. This passage is the only evidence that he was among the teachers of Polus. See Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1413b14 (where L. is mentioned as a poet who writes to be read) and 1414b17. In the latter passage Socrates uses Licymnius' book *Ἡ Τέχνη* as a bad example of the invention of technical terms, such as "a wind of speed," "wandering off," "branches."

[14] Hermeias, the scholiast on *Phaedrus* 267c, identifies Licyimnius as having taught Polus distinctions among names, such as which ones are valid (κύρια), which are compounds, which epithets, etc., with respect to εὐέπεια. Koller (1958, 25) plausibly argues that the valid names are words in standard as opposed to poetic usage. I infer that Finespeech, then, is the catch-all for non-standard or poetical usage, and this is corroborated by its use here with ποήσις. That *orthoepeia* concerns

PHAEDRUS: And the Protagorean [*elements*],[15] Socrates, weren't they something like those?

SOCRATES: A certain Correctness of Diction (*orthoepeia*),[16] my boy, and many others, fine ones, too.

The main importance of this passage lies in its testimony that Protagoras taught something he called *orthoepeia*, that this was somewhat like Polus' "Muses" Elements (τὰ Μουσαῖα λόγων), and that he taught many other such things.

In what respect does the passage compare Protagoras' teaching to that of Polus? The one obvious feature that *orthoepeia* has in common with the elements in Polus' teaching, besides its connection with verse, is that its name is technical and compound; Socrates is making fun of the rhetorical custom of concocting jargon.

What is *orthoepeia*? The context is little help. It has been considered the title of a work by Protagoras, but this is doubtful in view of the "certain" (τις, so Pfeiffer 1968, 280, cf. Guthrie 1969, 205n2). Hermeias read it in the fifth century AD as κυριολέξια (literal or perhaps non-poetical usage)[17]; in this he has been followed by Koller (1958, 25) and Classen (1959, 225), but the identification is rejected by Pfeiffer (1968, 280), as being unsupported by the tradition. We have no reason to reject Hermeias' testimony, however, and in any case we are able to supply from the *Protagoras* the sort of context in which Protagoras would have applied *orthoepeia* to straighten out poetic diction: where a poet apparently contradicted himself, part of what the poet said would require correction.

We know that in fifth-century usage *orthoepeia* had to do with criticism of poetry. Democritus used the word in the title of a work of Homeric criticism (DK 68 B20a), and it is likely therefore that *orthoepeia* is Protagoras' term for what he seeks in regard to poetry: to be able to distinguish what is correctly composed from what is not (*Protagoras* 339a2).

When is poetry incorrectly composed? What are the errors of poets? There are two main possibilities: (i) They may be the sort of errors of usage that Aristotle says Protagoras found in Homer, when he corrects the gender of an epithet of "wrath"

verse is fairly clear; that Polus' concern is with verse is suggested by the link to the Muses. Poetry is relevant to rhetoric because speakers spoke about poetry (as we learn from the *Protagoras* 338e ff.), and because elements of verse were used in high rhetorical style (as in the speech of Agathon in Plato's *Symposium*).

[15] Προταγόρεια (267c4): This expression is used in the *Sophist* for a single book that evidently had many headings and discussed many arts (232d9). Here it is parallel to Polus' gallery of teachings, and so may refer to the headings in Protagoras' book. Whatever these Protagorean elements are, the following line shows that there were many of them. It is unclear whether this means that Protagoras wrote many books on such matters, or that he coined many technical terms, but the latter is intrinsically more likely.

[16] On this see Fehling (1965, 216), Guthrie (1969, 205), and Pfeiffer (1968 Vol I: 280–1). Cf Aristophanes *Frogs* 1181, Democritus, DK 68B18a, 20a.

[17] Hermeias: ὀρθοέπειά γέ τις: τουτέστι κυριολέξια: διὰ γὰρ τῶν κυριῶν ὀνομάτων μετήρχετ᾽ ὁ Π. τὸν λόγον καὶ ὀυ διὰ παραβολῶν καὶ ἐπιθέτων (Orthoepeia: that is valid diction: Protagoras pursues speech through valid words, rather than through indirection or ornament).

(*menin*) in the second line.[18] The trouble with this interpretation of *orthoepeia* is that it is nowhere supported by Plato. More likely, (ii) the errors of poets are either false statements[19] or statements that do not accurately express the poet's thoughts. We shall see that these latter alternatives merge on the assumption that the poet aims to tell the truth. If so, and poet's thoughts are always taken to be true, than anything the poet says that is false on the most obvious interpretation fails to represent the poet's thoughts accurately or clearly. Perhaps we can offer a better formulation, so that the work clearly represents a thought that we believe to be true.[20]

When a poet says opposite things, Protagoras holds that one of them must have been said incorrectly, and that one who is clever (*deinos*) about poetry knows which one it is. The presupposition of the inquiry, ironically parodied by Socrates, is that what the poet believed was true, but that his verse did not represent that belief exactly or unambiguously; it is then the critic's job to disambiguate poetry in such a way that it comes out true, as intended by its author (*Protagoras* 345de). Disambiguated poetry, we may suppose, has been put into proper form, or *Orthoepeia*. The concept is closely related to that of the Correctness of Words, to which I now turn.

Correctness of Words

The Correctness of Words is well attested as a Protagorean principle (Plato, *Cratylus* 391c3), but we know very little of how it was used. Probably it was a part of the larger scheme of the Correctness of Diction, and, judging from the point about gender (section "Gender" below), it required that a speaker or writer use only such words as correctly reveal the natures of their subjects (hence the difficulty of applying the principle to the gods, whose natures are unknown to us).

> SOC: You should beg your brother[21] and ask him to teach you the correctness about such things [as words], which he learned from Protagoras.
> HERM: That would be a strange thing for me to ask, Socrates, if I entirely do not accept the "Truth" of Protagoras—that I should welcome what he said by this "Truth" as if it were worth something. (*Cratylus* 391c2–7, *cf.* 400d6–401a5)[22]

[18] Aristotle, *Soph. El.* 173b19, cf. Aristophanes *Clouds*, 657 ff., where unconventional instruction in the genders of nouns is given as an example of the "unjust logic." Cf. Fehling (1965, 212–17).

[19] So, I think, Koller, who does not distinguish *Orthoepeia* from *Orthotes Onomaton* (Koller 1958).

[20] That is the method of interpretation applied by Socrates to the oracle (*Apology* 21b3, ff.) and a famous saying of Simonides (*Republic* 1, 332b9, ff.).

[21] Hermogenes' brother is Kallias, host to Protagoras and other teachers of the new learning; the host in the *Protagoras*.

[22] [Socrates:] Yes, Hermogenes, by the god, if we have any intelligence we will observe the very best type of correctness, to whit: about the gods we know nothing, neither about them nor about the names by which they call themselves. But clearly the names they use are true. There is, however, a second type of correctness, as it is our custom in our prayers, to address them as whoever

The passage testifies to Protagoras' having taught something he called the "correctness of names." What sort of correctness is at issue? "Such things" has been taken by almost all scholars (e.g. by Koller 1958, 25) as referring to *words* in 391A3, so that the present passage would refer to *the correctness of words*. Pfeiffer (1968, 280) objects to this reading of "such." But we have additional support for this reading: (i) the story told by Protagoras' contemporary Stesimbrotus, reported in Plutarch's life of Pericles 36, that Protagoras discussed with Pericles how responsibility for an accident should be placed according to the most correct speech; (ii) the evidence that Protagoras was concerned with Correctness of Poetic Diction; and (iii) the evidence we have seen that Protagoras corrected poetry as a teaching exercise.

For Plato, a word is a δήλωμα τοῦ πράγματος (433d); from this Koller infers that the correctness of words is, simply, truth (1958, 25). So Plato would say that correct names are true names. If what I have said about *orthoepeia* is right, then Protagoras would agree. Part of the project of cleaning up poor writing will be to make sure that each word is true to the matter to which it refers. Gender will be a special case of this: a true word will match in grammatical gender the gender of hat to which it refers.[23]

Gender

> The fourth rule is to distinguish the classes of nouns, masculine, feminine and neuter; for these also must be given correctly (ὀρθῶς). (*Rhetoric* III.5, 1407b6)
>
> As Protagoras used to say, if wrath (μῆνις) and helmet (πήληξ) are masculine, then one who says "destructive" [of wrath in the feminine gender] commits a solecism, though he does not appear to do so to anyone else. (*Sophisticis Elenchis* XIV, 173b17)

For a parody of Protagoras' teaching on gender, see Aristophanes *Clouds* 657 ff., where unconventional instruction in the genders of nouns is given as an example of the "unjust logic." Aristotle refers in the second passage to Protagoras' correction of the second line of Homer's *Iliad*: wrath being warlike, and belonging to Achilles, should be masculine, and so its modifier ("destructive") should not take the feminine form. That Protagoras' correction of poetry went beyond such grammatical points is evident from his discussion of Simonides. In any case, it is clear that Protagoras' point was not pedantic: he meant to remind his students of the nature of wrath as an exercise in choosing words to convey meanings correctly.

---

they are pleased to be called, and from whatever parents, since we don't know any more than that. I think that is a fine custom (*Cratylus* 400d6–401a5).

[23] I assume here without argument that Plato and Protagoras share a roughly referential theory of meaning.

Speech Acts

> As regards diction (λέξις), one sort of inquiry concerns the modes of diction (σχήματα τῆς λέξεως), which should be known by an actor or one whose profession it is: for example, what is a command and what is a prayer or a statement or a threat or a question or an answer or whatever. But no criticism worth our concern is brought against poetry for knowledge or ignorance of these things. For who would suppose the poet erred where Protagoras criticizes him, for giving a command when he thought he was praying when he said, "Sing, goddess of the wrath?" (*Poetics* 19, 1456b15)

Protagoras' interest in the classification of speech acts is well attested (Diogenes ix.53, Suidas 29a.ii.). The present passage testifies that he was concerned with the appropriate use of language for each type of speech act. This too was part of his teaching on correct diction. The poet here has obscured his meaning (so Protagoras would say) by using a grammatical form that fits the wrong speech act. The poet has expressed a prayer as a command; Greek has the resources to couch the prayer in language more appropriate to prayer, but the poet has used the resources of the Greek language incorrectly.[24]

The Case of Simonides

Socrates' first response to Protagoras' criticism of Simonides may be a parody of what Protagoras was known to have done with poetry. As a reading of the poem's text, this interpretation is simply wrong, though as an expression of theory about virtue-acquisition it may be wise enough.

Socrates distinguishes *being* from *becoming* and suggests that Simonides means what Hesiod meant, when he said that it is hard to achieve virtue, but easy to retain it once you have it. Call this the Hesiodic interpretation. Socrates has spoken in defense of Simonides, as if Protagoras' only point had been to defeat the poet. This is plainly a misunderstanding of the program Protagoras outlined at 339a. Protagoras' stated aim was not to win over or to defeat a competitor, but to impart critical methods to students; implicitly, as we shall see, he aimed also at charity in interpretation. Modern critics should be slow to accept Socrates' ironical verdict that Protagoras' aim was to defeat the poet. What Protagoras actually proposes is just what many of us do in teaching from the history of philosophy—speculating as to an author's meaning on the basis of the charitable assumption that the author aimed at the truth of the matter.

Protagoras nevertheless takes Socrates' defense as a correction of Simonides, but judges it a bad one. Socrates has not rephrased Simonides' verse in literal terms that

[24] As with the gender issue, the poet has not violated any of the rules of Greek construction. Prayers are often couched in the imperative. But constructions with infinitive or optative are possible, and might appear more reverent. Protagoras evidently wishes his students to pay more attention to mood.

would meet his standards for charitable interpretation. Instead, Socrates has merely pointed to the distinction between *being* and *becoming*, quoting another poet whose views (he thinks) accord with the ones he attributes to Simonides. Evidently that is enough for Socrates, but not for Protagoras:

> Protagoras said: "This correction (ἐπανόρθωμά) of yours contains a greater mistake than what you were correcting."
> And I said: "Then it's bad work on my part, apparently, and I'm a ridiculous sort of a healer. In healing a disease I make it greater."
> "That's the way it is," he said.
> How?
> It would be great ignorance in a poet to say that virtue is so slight a thing to have[25] [that it is so easy to *be* virtuous[26]], when that is the most difficult thing of all, in the opinion of all human beings. (340d6–e7)

Protagoras' complaint shows that his criterion for success in ἐπανόρθωμα is indeed charity: the corrected text should say something not merely consistent, but plausible; above all, the correction should avoid attributing new mistakes in content to the poet.

Socrates evidently accepts the objection and the principles on which it is made, for he proceeds to a second interpretation that does not attribute the objectionable view to Simonides (342a6–347a5). Call this the Socratic interpretation. Here he goes to perverse lengths to wring the meaning he wants from the text (Taylor 1976: 145–6). The most striking example is at 345d6 ff., where Socrates misconstrues an adverb to allow that Simonides held the extraordinary Socratic view that no one willingly does wrong—that, in other words, Simonides meant to say something that Socrates believes to be true, but Protagoras and the others in the audience probably would not.

Socrates' method here is one we have seen him use in other contexts. He uses it in explaining the Delphic god's answer "no one" to the question "is anyone wiser than Socrates" (*Apology* 21b3 ff.). He treats this as a riddle. "Of course," he says, "the god does not lie" (21b6), introducing a belief that many of Socrates' audience would not share. The Homeric gods are known for lying to mortals. But on Socrates' view, the words of the god must be true, and so he must find an interpretation under which they are true.

He uses a similar procedure in *Republic* 1 when he treats Simonides' statement that justice is giving to each person the things that are owed to that person (331e3). The sentence must be taken as a riddle, with a meaning other than what it wears on its face (332b9), and we cannot attribute such a statement to a wise author under any interpretation that would make it violate the truth of what Socrates has just greed on with his companion (335e7–9). We could read the rest of the *Republic* as an exercise to determine what it really does mean to give every person what is owed to that person.

---

[25] The infinitive is a rare form of the perfect (ἐκτῆσθαι), in which tense κτάομαι means *to possess*, rather than its usual meaning, *to acquire*. On Plato's usage, see Adam and Adam's note to 319a.

[26] Protagoras refers to Socrates' citation of Hesiod at 340d4.

In *Protagoras*, Socrates seems to indicate that the method also belongs to Protagoras: In interpreting a text, work out the truth of the matter and then force the text to take on that meaning. His use of the method in this context is extravagant, and evidently involves parody of Protagoras' method, though he later attempts to draw Protagoras into the elite who disdain such proceedings as vulgar and common when the author of the text is not present (347c4). In reading Simonides, Socrates playfully mangles the Greek text, twisting it the way he needs in order to purge it of anything that he—Socrates—would hold to be false. This is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the charity Protagoras implicitly requested on Simonides' behalf, absurd because in the absence of the author, no one can be sure what truth the author intended to tell, as Socrates makes explicit soon after.[27]

Here lies the important difference between Socratic and Protagorean charity. For the truth of the matter, Protagoras appeals to "the opinion of all human beings" (340e7). Socrates would prefer to work out a conclusion in dialogue with the author—a luxury he did not have in the case of the oracle or the Simonides line in the *Republic*.

An interpretation along the lines suggested by Protagoras may fall distant from the conscious intent of the absent author, but at least it will make the content of the text plausible. By contrast, Socrates would try to reach agreement with the author as to what one should say about the matter. This—what one should say—will then be the author's current meaning. If the text can be forced to mean what the author now thinks, the interpretation will have satisfied two criteria to Protagoras' one. It will be both plausible and in accord with the author's thinking, whereas Protagoras' result was at best only plausible.

The main features of the method Socrates imitates here are (i) an unconventional treatment of syntax, and (ii) a devotion to the principle of charity so extreme as not to allow the author any false beliefs. This is evidence that Protagoras may have followed such a method in "correcting" the texts of poets to give them the meanings he wanted. By itself, the evidence is not strong. Taken with the evidence for Protagoras' teaching of correctness elsewhere, however, it is fairly convincing: *orthoepeia* is "poem-straightening"; it adjusts a poem to give it a true meaning about virtue; in doing so, *orthoepeia* teaches students about virtue and diction at the same time.

As for Protagoras, we are not allowed to hear his correction of the poem. We have to ask how he would have corrected Simonides in the presence of a more docile pupil than Socrates. The program of 339a requires Protagoras to teach his pupils to distinguish correct from incorrect verses, and to give a reason for their decisions. Whereas Socrates has a way of making both verses look right, Protagoras apparently would choose between them. But how could he? He needs to maintain his

[27] "That's how it is in gatherings like this, if they're made up of such men as most of us say we are: they have no need of an alien voice, no need of poets who cannot be questioned as to what they mean. When most people bring a poet into a discussion, some say he intended one thing, others disagree; for they are discussing a subject on which they cannot possibly be tested" (347e1–7). Note that in the *Ion* Socrates interrogates a surrogate for Homer, not by way of interpreting Homer's texts, but in order to explode the claim that poets such as Homer are wise—a claim he is allowing here in the case of Simonides.

view that virtue is a difficult thing to have (340e7) without giving up the advertised claim that his pupils will—easily—grow better every day (318a). Perhaps Protagoras would say that it is generally difficult to grow in virtue, but easy with a fine teacher. Then the only line he would have to correct is the one in which Simonides expressed disagreement with Pittacus.

At any rate it is clear that we do not have a complete example here of Protagorean ἐπανόρθωμα. A need for correction is established: on a bald reading, Simonides seems to say opposite things. And a challenge is made: how can one interpret the poem so as to eliminate the difficulty without attributing a worse mistake to the poet?

The larger context, together with 325e1–326b6, suggests that Protagoras studied poetry not with an eye to defeating its authors, and not even in the more academic hope of ascertaining what was in the poets' minds. He used poetry in moral education, as a vehicle for his own moral doctrines. These, he must have supposed, could be found in a correct reading of the poets' verses. Why would he have supposed this? The answer may to do with the *homomensura*, and should be discussed on another occasion.

The use of epic poetry in education was traditional in Greece.[28] Protagoras' word for verses, *epoi*, is most properly used of epic verse. Probably his teaching was based on Homer and Hesiod, with a little Simonides thrown in (cf. 316d7). The interesting point is that he did not treat poets simply as authorities, but used a critical method much like that later recommended by Plato.[29]

Plato may have been influenced in this by Protagoras. His disdain for the elenchus of absent poets did not prevent him from correcting some poetry, and from allowing a limited use of corrected poetry in moral education (*Republic* III).

Conclusion

If my reconstruction is correct, Protagoras held that people can, and often do, speak incorrectly. Sometimes he may have meant by this that they violated canons of grammar or style. But the Socratic parody shows that Socrates thinks what Protagoras has in mind by "speaking incorrectly" is saying what you do not mean to say, and Socrates may be following Protagoras when he presumes that you have failed in this manner when you say something that is not true on a literal reading. By the Principle of Correct Diction, Protagoras straightens out what a poet says so that it correctly expresses the poet's intention, which must be to tell the truth. The example shows also that Protagoras applied the method to poetry; and we do not know that he applied it to anything else.

[28] See Aristophanes *Frogs*, 1032 ff.

[29] For Plato's attack on poetic wisdom and on the tradition of teaching from poetry, see *Apology* 22a–c, *Ion* passim (esp. 540b), *Republic* 386c ff., 588d ff.

The parallel with Socratic elenchus is striking. I have argued elsewhere that the elenchus works out an account of what you believe by assuming, like Protagoras, that you mean to say the truth. Socrates allow that you may not have said what you meant, and that you may not even have been aware of precisely what you meant.[30] The main difference between Protagoras and Socrates is the one to which Socrates himself calls attention (347e1–7): Protagoras straightens the poems of dead poets, who cannot be questioned as to their meaning; Socrates examines the beliefs of people who are present and can be called to account—can be spurred by questions to correct their own words. There is a secondary difference as well. The aim of Socratic elenchus is a mixed charity: he will do his best for your view up to a point, but will eventually draw it into an impasse or a *peritrope* so as to undermine your claim to knowledge. Protagoras probably did not share this aim; the *homomensura* seems to commit him to respecting your claim to knowledge.

If Plato's reading of the *homomensura* were correct, then Protagoras' goal would have to be entirely charitable. But Plato cannot be right about the *homomensura*, as has been argued by a number of scholars.[31] The relativism Plato attributes to Protagoras is incompatible with his known teachings, such as *orthoepeia*. There appears to be a deep link between Protagoras and Socrates. Protagoras held (at least) that the human mind and the truth are attuned to each other in some way. Evidently he thought we must work to realize this attunement, by cleaning up our diction to make it literal, rooting out contradictions, etc. Socrates believed nearly the same thing: that, under his type of questioning, anyone's beliefs can come closer to the truth. Protagoras and Plato's Socrates agree that fixing contradictions leads to better *logoi*, and that speakers have the power to improve their beliefs by seeing and fixing tensions among their beliefs. If I am right, Protagoras is the grandfather of what Plato has given us as Socratic questioning, the *elenchus*.

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[31] Most importantly Richard Bett (1989); I reach a similar conclusion in my unpublished book on Protagoras.

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