Of Science and Civic Character: A Study of Plato, Bacon and Hobbes

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in partial fulfillment of
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Abstract

This dissertation explores the relationship between science and the pursuit of knowledge on the one hand and civic character and virtue on the other, through a comparison of the Platonic critique of the sophists in Plato's *Protagoras* to Francis Bacon's and Thomas Hobbes' rejection of ancient science founded on Greek philosophy.

The first part of the dissertation is an exegesis of Plato's *Protagoras* which argues that the *Protagoras* is extended meditation on the grounds for a public teaching of politics which promotes genuine civic virtue and checks political hubris. Though the discussion in the dialogue ends with a highly unsatisfactory doctrine in the hedonistic calculus, it points to the need for the discussions in a surprising number of dialogues, including the *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Republic* and *Laws* among others. I argue accordingly that the *Protagoras* should be considered among the most central of Plato's political dialogues.

The second part of the dissertation examines Sir Francis Bacon's refutation of ancient science, grounded on Greek science and aims to show that his refutation is meant to ground a new active science, while leaving space for traditional architectonic political philosophy. This argument is made by showing that Bacon meets at least part of the Platonic critique of the sophists, but on different grounds than Platonic philosophy.

The final part of the dissertation examines the work of Thomas Hobbes to show that Hobbes argues from the basis of the Baconian rejection of Greek philosophy to establish his *Leviathan* on some of the same grounds from which Protagoras' argued.

The dissertation as a whole aims to add to the debates around the meaning of both modern natural science and democratic politics in the post-modern context. It argues that by reading the early moderns as careful readers of the ancients we become aware of the limits of the modern project and therefore become better, more self-conscious moderns.

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Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	PLATO’S PROTAGORAS: PROMETHEAN INTELLECTS AND POLITICAL HUBRIS.....	4
2.1	INTRODUCTION	4
2.2	THE TRIPLE PREFACE.....	14
2.3	PROTAGORAS’ GREAT SPEECH	35
2.4	SOCRATES’ SOCRATIC RESPONSE	76
2.5	CRISIS 334C – 338E.....	95
2.6	SIMONIDES AND PITTACUS: SOCRATES’ SOPHISTIC RESPONSE	105
2.7	SOCRATES’ SECOND SOCRATIC RESPONSE	131
2.8	SOCRATES’ COMMON ARGUMENT WITH PROTAGORAS, PRODICUS AND HIPPIAS.....	148
2.9	CONCLUSION	164
3	FRANCIS BACON AND THE RE-FOUNDING OF THE REGIME OF THE SCIENCES.....	184
3.1	INTRODUCTION	184
3.2	F. BACON AND THE PHILOSOPHIC TRADITION.....	189
3.3	GREEK PHILOSOPHY AS SOPHISTRY	195
3.4	THE SCIENTIFIC CHARACTER.....	206
3.5	SCIENCE AS POPULAR POLITY.....	215
3.6	CONCLUSION: INTERPRETATION AND CULTIVATION.....	224
4	THOMAS HOBBS’ PUBLIC POLITICAL SCIENCE.....	231
4.1	INTRODUCTION	231
4.2	HOBBS’S HISTORY OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: <i>DE CIVE</i>	232
4.3	HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY IN LEVIATHAN	239
4.4	‘KING OVER ALL THE SONS OF PRIDE’	244
4.5	CONCLUSION: HOBBS AND PROTAGORAS: MEN OF MOTION.	260
5	REVIEW & CONCLUSION	268
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	279

Table of Appendices

APPENDIX 1: DRAMATIC PERSONAE.....	280
APPENDIX 2: CHARACTERS OF THE PROTAGORAS IN OTHER PLATONIC DIALOGUES.....	281

1 Introduction

At the most abstract level this dissertation aims to explore the relationship between philosophy and politics, through a study of Plato, Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes. In particular, it aims to understand what the philosophic tradition teaches about what can be done to improve politics with philosophy. It is by no means obvious that this is even possible; in fact, it is possible that philosophy corrupts politics. It is generally accepted that it is not philosophy, but sophistry which corrupts politics. However, it is not easy to separate philosophy from sophistry. On the surface their activities look very similar; this is to say that the many cannot distinguish sophistry from philosophy; they see only professors of knowledge.¹ If the many see only professors and they are not all philosophers, by what ground are we assured that professors have a positive influence on

¹ See Jacob Klein, *Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p v. Klein's formulation for the whole movement of the *Theaetetus* is a movement from a search for a Professor of wisdom which becomes the discovery of the lover of wisdom.

politics? Does science reinforce civic character or corrupt it? Some professors, such as Leo Strauss² and Allan Bloom³ argue that some professors of knowledge, those who genuinely teach a liberal education, do in fact educate their students and make them better citizens. This education is modeled on the view of education outlined in Book Seven of Plato's *Republic*, which depicts the release and ascent of a man from a cave into the daylight. Sophistic education, which is also depicted in Plato's *Republic*, amounts to flattery and is corrupting, and is compared to the knowledge that pleases and pains a giant beast. Both accounts are given in the context of Socrates' explanation of why philosophers do not become kings or why kings do not adequately philosophize. The education depicted in the dramatic context of the *Republic*, which takes place in Cephalus's private home and is the education of Glaucon, Adiemantus and the others, depicts how it is possible for philosophy to improve politics. It improves politics by teaching the youth. This solution was the one which Plato acted on by establishing the academy and is still with us in the form of the university. The other solution, depicted in the *Laws*, and alluded to in the *Protagoras*, is that the professors of knowledge only counsel political power in secret, away from the many. Ancient philosophy tends to conclude that a public advocacy of learning is not advisable because of the limitations of the vulgar. Plato's solution, however, is a synthesis of the sophists who openly profess to teach and the Socratic method.

A difference between the ancients and the moderns is that the moderns tend to argue for the need for a better understanding of effectual truth. Early English philosophy was

² Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp 3-8.

³ The whole of: Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

concerned with the promotion of learning as useful. Natural philosophy to be useful must create works and political philosophy to be useful must create peace. This dissertation aims to explore the relationship between the Platonic critique of sophistry and early English philosophy. The first part of the dissertation takes the form of a commentary on Plato's Protagoras, and the second part, which is an investigation into early English philosophy, takes the form of a study of Francis Bacon's *Great Instauration and New Organon* and a study of the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, primarily as it is expressed in his *Leviathan*.

2 Plato's Protagoras: Promethean Intellects and Political Hubris

2.1 Introduction

The subjects of *Protagoras* are so varied that it is difficult to see how all the parts come together to form a whole. Socrates' response to Protagoras' 'Great Speech' appears only tangentially relevant to the subject of whether virtue can be taught, and the long 'digression' to debate a poem of Simonides' has appeared to some scholars as mere comic relief from the more serious and tedious arguments.

Much of the confusion in the literature on the *Protagoras* can be clarified by considering the arguments of the dialogue in the light of a careful consideration of the dramatic context.⁴ The efficient cause of the dramatic action is Socrates' agreement to accompany Hippocrates, an ambitious youth, to meet and examine the most famous of the sophists,

⁴ See Larry Goldberg, *A Commentary on Plato's Protagoras* (American University Studies Series 5: Philosophy, vol. 1. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 1983), intro.

Protagoras. The dialogue almost certainly must be about Protagoras' sophistry, but the varied topics covered in Socrates' and Protagoras' discussion often make it difficult to see how this is the sustained subject of the dialogue. The conversation moves from the dangers of claiming to teach virtue, to a myth about the human condition, to arguments about the unity of virtue, to extended examples of literary criticism, to arguments about the power of knowledge and whether pleasure is the same as the good⁵. Scholars have presented various ways of summing up more precisely what the Protagoras' accomplishes as an argument and as a dialogue, and most come to the conclusion that the dialogue is primarily about the contest between Socrates and Protagoras. What scholars have varied opinions about is exactly what is at stake in the contest. Scholars have variously argued that the contest is primarily about scientific method, pedagogy in general (Goldberg, Jaeger, Friedländer, Nussbaum), the place of the professor in the city (Coby), and about

⁵ Oddly enough the arguments of the scholars concerning this section rely on a superficial consideration of the dramatic context when they claim this section of the dialogue to be a comic diversion from the serious arguments. See for example: Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); Gregory Vlastos, *Socratic Studies*, edited by Myles Burnyeat (New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933); A.E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work* (London, Methuen, 1960); C.W. Taylor's approach in Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. with notes by C. C. W. Taylor (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1976). Notable exceptions are Werner Wilhelm Jaeger, *Paideia: ideals of Greek culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943-1945); Tucker Landy, "Virtue, Art, and the Good Life in Plato's Protagoras," *Interpretation* 23/3 (Spring 1994): 287-308; Paul Friedländer, *Plato*, trans. by Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958); Patrick Coby, *Socrates and the Sophistic Enlightenment: a Commentary on Plato's Protagoras* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1987); Joseph Cropsey, *Plato's World: Man's Place in the Cosmo*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Goldberg, *Commentary*.

the good life and how virtue is acquired (Burnyeat, Cropsey, Wiengartner, Bartlett and Landy).⁶

The literature on the *Protagoras* can be divided into those scholars which attempted to consider the arguments of the dialogue relative to the dramatic context and those who do not. In my judgment, most of the best literature on the *Protagoras* follows this former general hermeneutical principle. Though much of the newer scholarship (see for example, Bartlett, Landy, Coby, Goldberg, Cropsey, Miller) take into consideration the dramatic context, it does not follow that all of the old literature does not (see for example, Jaeger, Friedlander, Wiengartner).⁷ There is a line in Platonic scholarship which follows his general hermeneutical principle that can be traced from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century. It almost goes without saying that much of the scholarship from the twentieth century does not follow this general rule (See for example, Muir, Morrison,

⁶ Goldberg, *Commentary*; Jaeger, *Paidea*; Friedländer, *Plato*; Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*; Plato, *Plato's Protagoras: A Socratic Commentary*, trans. by B. A. F Hubbard and E.S Karnofsky, with a foreword by M.F. Burnyeat (London: Duckworth Publishers, 1982); Cropsey, *Plato's World*; Rudolph H Weingartner, *The Unity of the Platonic Dialogue: the Cratylus, the Protagoras, the Parmenides* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Comapny 1973); Plato. *Protagoras and Meno*, trans. with notes and interpretive essays by Robert C. Bartlett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Landy, "Good Life."

⁷ Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*; Landy, "Good Life"; Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*; Goldberg, *Commentary*; Cropsey, *Plato's World*; Clyde Lee Miller "The Prometheus Story in Plato's Protagoras." *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*. 7/2 (May 1978): 22-32; Jaeger, *Paidea*; Friedlander, *Plato*; Wiengartner, *Unity of the Platonic Dialogue*.

Kerford, Grube, Shorey, Vlastos, Gagarin, A.E. Taylor, and C.C.W Taylor).⁸ This study aims to follow the tradition inaugurated in the twentieth century by Friedländer.

Much of the other kind of scholarship consists of very thorough analyses of the logic of the surface arguments combined with attempts to relate those arguments to what they take to be the historical context. In principle, this is not wrong, as much can be learned from following the clues left in the dialogues about the historical and political situation in which they were intentionally set. What is mistaken, I argue, is using the historical circumstances in which Plato wrote to place limits on what Plato must have thought about the most important questions. The only consideration of the historical events, circumstances and context in which Plato wrote will be those which the author himself has chosen as his setting for the dialogue. Pains will be taken to see how the historical dimension of the setting of the dialogue illuminates the meaning of the discussion within the dialogue.

We know that the *Protagoras* must be dramatically set before the *Symposium* (416 B.C.E.) due to the age of some of the characters present. We also know that Protagoras died around 420 B.C.E. and that Pericles and his sons died around 429 B.C.E. of the plague. If Alcibiades, who is present in the *Protagoras*, was born in 450 B.C.E., and at the time of the dialogue was just becoming a man, then the dramatic date for dialogue would seem to be somewhere between 433 B.C.E. and 429 B.C.E., during the time before

⁸ J.V. Muir, "Protagoras and Education at Thourioi," *Greece & Rome. 2nd series* 29/1 (April 1982): 17-24; J.S. Morrison, "The Place of Protagoras in Athenian Public Life (460-415 B.C.): pp 1-16," *The Classical Quarterly* (January-April, 1941); G.B. Kerford, "Protagoras's Doctrine of Justice and Virtue in the *Protagoras* of Plato," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 73 (1953): 42-45; G.M.A. Grube, "The Structural Unity of the *Protagoras*," *The Classical Quarterly* 27 number ¾ (July-Oct 1953): 203-207; Shorey, *What Plato Said*; Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*; Vlastos, *Socratic Studies*; Michael Gagarin, "The Purpose of Plato's *Protagoras*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 100, (1969): 133-164. A.E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work*; and C.C.W Taylor, *Protagoras*.

the Peloponnesian war.⁹ The dialogue is most likely set before the war began, perhaps during the dispute over Cocrya, which set the stage for the violent siege at Potidaea. Socrates and Alcibiades were part of the battles in the loss and recapture of Potidaea, which lasted from 431-429 B.C.E.. In the *Charmides*, the dialogue which chronologically immediately follows the *Protagoras*, Socrates' extended absence from Athens is remarked by Critias comment on how Charmides has grown (*Charmides*, 154a-b). It is safe to say, and most commentators agree, the *Protagoras* is situated in either 433 B.C.E. or 432 B.C.E., during the events which lead up to the Peloponnesian War.

Though it is safe and conventional to situate the *Protagoras* in either 433 B.C.E. or 432 B.C.E. there are a number of anachronisms which suggest a date closer to 420 B.C.E..¹⁰ The first is that Callias appears to be master of the house, which suggests that Hipponicus, his father, is dead. Hipponicus died in battle in 424 B.C.E.. The second is that Protagoras, in his 'great speech', refers to a play by Pherecrates, *The Savages*, "presented last year at the Lenaea".¹¹ The play is believed to have been produced in 420, suggesting the dramatic date for the *Protagoras* to be 419 B.C.E.. Plato's inclusion of these details is perhaps meant to bring to mind the peace of Nicias, signed in 421 B.C.E. which lasted until 418 B.C.E.. This suggests a time when it looked as if Athens might win the war against Sparta. The two dates combined, 432 B.C.E. to 419 B.C.E., represent the 14 best years of the War for Athens, the plague of Athens notwithstanding, and it also represents the time when the youth of 432 B.C.E. gain ascendance in Athenian politics.

⁹ J.S. Morrison and George C. Simmons both have very useful discussions of plausible chronologies for Protagoras' life. J.S. Morrison, "The Place of Protagoras"; Simmons, George C, "Protagoras on Education and Society," *Paedagogica Historica* XII, 2 (1972): 518-537.

¹⁰ John Walsh, "The Dramatic Dates of Plato's Protagoras and the lessons for *Arete*," *Classical Quarterly. New Series* Vol. 34, No. 1 (1984): 101-106.

¹¹ See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, p24 n81.

The dramatic date(s) of the *Protagoras* highlight the potential of the many ambitious youths present at Callias' House. Lastly, the dramatic dates of the dialogue make ghosts of some of those present, especially the sons of Pericles, but if the dialogue refers to 419 B.C.E., then perhaps also of Protagoras himself. In this sense the dialogue is as much an investigation into the legacy of Protagoras as the *Theaetetus*. It appears that Plato has made the dialogue as mythic as Socrates presents Callias' House.

The setting of the dialogue, regardless of its precise date, suggests Athens at the very height of its imperial power when Pericles was the most ascendant ruler of Athens for nearly a decade. During that time, Pericles was known to have taken advice on political matters from the sophists, including Protagoras. Their close association, if not friendship, and Pericles' trust of Protagoras on political matters, is supported by Diogenes and Plutarch.¹² This closeness is demonstrated in the dialogue by the fact that Protagoras is portrayed as a teacher to Pericles' sons. The time is one of excitement: one of the great sophists of Greece has come to Athens on the eve of what promises to be an epic war. This setting is the democratic Athens praised by Thucydides' Pericles in his funeral oration:

“We have a form of government that does not try to imitate the laws of our neighbouring states. We are more an example to others, than they are to us. In name, it is called democracy, because it is managed not for a few people, but for the majority....We are free and generous not only in our public activities as citizens, but also in our daily lives: there is no suspicion in our dealings with one another, and we are not offended by our neighbour for following his own pleasure (2.37)....The greatness of our city has caused all things from all parts of the earth to be imported here, so that we enjoy

¹² Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, translated by C. D. Yonge (<http://fxylib.znufe.edu.cn/wgfljd/%B9%C5%B5%E4%D0%DE%B4%C7%D1%A7/pw/diogenes/index.htm>), Book 9; Plutarch, *Lives*, (<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=674>), Pericles, sec. 36.

the products of other nations with no less familiarity than our own (2.38)...We are lovers of nobility without restraint, and lovers of wisdom without softening of character (2.40)...In sum, I say that our city as a whole is a lesson for Greece, and that each of us presents himself as a self-restrained individual, disposed to the widest possible diversity of actions, with every grace and great versatility. This is not merely a boast in words for the occasion but the truth in fact, as the power of this city, which we have obtained by having this character, makes evident" (2.41).¹³

Though the *Protagoras* invokes the glory and power of Athens the impending Peloponnesian War also reminds us that Athens was feverish, confident, even arrogant, with its power. That Alcibiades' name is mentioned in the first lines of the dialogue reinforce this sense. It is this side of Athenian greatness which accentuates the dialogue's dark, urgent, even mercenary mood. The time is a pressing one, not only for Hippocrates, son of Apollodorus, to learn to be wise, but also for Athens, as the peace between Athens and Sparta, which has held for almost fifteen years, is about to break. Thucydides attributes the cause of the failed peace to be nothing other than the growth of Athenian power (1.23). The Athenians suspect that war is coming and Protagoras, a man known for his political knowledge and for teaching virtue, has come to town. The reason for his visit is never revealed in the dialogue and what we learn of Protagoras' motivations suggests he is here in pursuit of money and reputation. The impending war suggests that he might be here to advise Pericles on the coming conflict and on the highest matters of state, where the stakes are life and death.

¹³ Thucydides. *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: The Essence of Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., October 1993).

There are twenty-one named characters present at Callias' house¹⁴ and they represent an impressive cast who end up playing significant roles in the development of the coming war with Sparta. Alcibiades, the advocate of the invasion of Syracuse, traitor and defector to the Spartans, is present. Charmides and Critas, the notorious members of the pro-Spartan thirty-tyrants which ruled Athens after the conflict, are also present. Adiemantus, son of Leucolophides, is present and was a general in the war. While the dramatic setting is placed at the beginning (or middle) of the war, the characters remind us of the end of the war and thus of the disastrous loss for Athens. The presence of Pericles sons reminds us of their fate and the fate of their father in the plague of Athens. Though the setting is Athens at the bloom of her political glory, the mood of the dialogue reminds of her political degeneration.

The four characters around which the activity described in Callias' house occurs, highlights Athens' famous cosmopolitan love of wisdom. Not only Protagoras of Abdera, but the younger sophists, Prodicus of Ceos and Hippias of Elis, have been lured to Athens. The urgency and danger of the coming war has drawn those who believe themselves wise in the affairs of the city to Athens in pursuit of money and reputation.¹⁵ Protagoras has been in town some three days, and it is on this third day that it becomes time to consult with and woo the youth of Athens to their classes. The youth seek an education to become notable in the city because they know that war is *the* opportunity to

¹⁴ Callias' house is also the setting for Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. See Xenophon, *The Memorabilia*, trans. by Amy L. Bonnette and Christopher J. Bruell (Cornell University Press, 2001). See also Appendix 1 and 2 for an analysis of where the characters occur in other Platonic dialogues and which Greek cities are represented in the dialogue.

¹⁵ See *Greater Hippias* (282b-d). Here Socrates remarks that both Gorgias and Prodicus have acted as ambassadors for their respective cities. The actual reason or time when they gave speeches to the Athenian assembly is not indicated. Plato, *The Roots of Political Philosophy: 10 Forgotten Dialogues*, edited by Thomas Pangle (Cornell University Press, 1987), pp 307-339..

distinguish themselves in front of their fellow citizens and contribute to their great city. The fourth character around which the activity at Callias' house occurs is Socrates, and discovering his motivation for coming to see Protagoras is one of the first puzzles of the dialogue and it leads to the distinction between philosophers and sophists.

The efficient cause which brings Protagoras and Socrates into contest is Hippocrates' act of enthusiastically waking Socrates before dawn so as to enlist Socrates' help in gaining him an audience with Protagoras. Hippocrates desires to become wise and believes that Protagoras can make him wise. When they arrive at Callias' house some of the most ambitious and promising youth of Athens are present, following and listening to those deemed wisest among the Greeks. Socrates presents his entrance to the house as a descent into Hades, the kingdom of the Dead. Hades is full of envious shades, some suffering for their vices on Earth, others desiring to be among the living again.¹⁶ Some of the characters in the room were integral to the defeat of Athens and the tyranny which followed. All of this suggests that the dialogue may be as much about education as it is about corruption. The question becomes, do the professors corrupt the politically ambitious or does politics corrupt professors? I use the word professor, for it is ambiguous as to whether one who professes to know is a sophist and charlatan or a philosopher and genuine. It is clear, through the presence of many belonging to the Socratic circle at Callias' house that philosophers as well as sophists are on trial in the dialogue. Since professors are of low repute we immediately suspect that it is they who corrupt the politically ambitious. The second possibility, that politics might corrupt

¹⁶ Homer, *Odyssey*, 11.500-640. For all references to Homer's *Odyssey* are to: Homer, *Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fagles with introduction and notes by Bernard Knox (Penguin Books USA Inc. New York, NY, 1975). For all references to Homer's *Iliad* are to: Homer *Iliad*, translated by Richard Lattimore (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1971).

professors is more subtly raised and is not developed in any of the commentaries referred to above. This possibility presents itself when the sophists are reduced to agreeing that they essentially teach nothing more than complicated versions of what the many already believe: that the pleasant is the same as the good and that justice is the necessary.¹⁷ The third possibility that professors and politicians are mutually corrupting is possible but for the example of Socrates, who tried to demonstrate in his trial that he knew that politics would either corrupt him or lead to his death. If we accept that Socrates did not corrupt the youth and perhaps was the only one in the city concerned with virtue, then it appears possible that professors can improve politics. This possibility is confirmed in the dialogue in the discussion of the ‘doctor of the soul.’ Thus this section of the thesis is concerned with the politics of professorial leadership. This formulation of the core of the dialogue will immediately bring to mind Plato’s assessment of politics in his *Republic*.¹⁸ That the *Protagoras* is an earlier presentation of that same insight is irrelevant, what is important is that it is the most concrete demonstration of this argument in the dialogues and it points to the *Republic* and the *Laws*.

Before turning to my commentary on the *Protagoras*’ proper, it is worth spending a moment to explain how I have organized my commentary as well as to identify the principles which were used to guide it. First, I present my account in the traditional method of commentary, on what I take to be the major sections of the dialogue. Most of the commentators proceed with the same approach and my division more or less follows

¹⁷ See Plato. *The Republic of Plato*, trans. with introduction and interpretive essay by Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1981), 493a-b. All reference to *Republic of Plato* will be to this translation.

¹⁸ *Republic of Plato*, 473c-e.

the tradition.¹⁹ Second, since it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive commentary of the dialogue, in some sections, my analysis will necessarily be shorter than the argument merits. I have edited my commentary to provide the most succinct demonstration of my thesis that the *Protagoras* is an important political dialogue in the Platonic corpus which ought to be considered in tandem with other important political dialogues such as the *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Laws*, *Republic* and *Symposium*.

2.2 The Triple Preface

The *Protagoras* is an acted dialogue which has three sections that preface Socrates' encounter with Protagoras.²⁰ The first is a dialogue between Socrates and an unnamed

¹⁹ For examples of traditional divisions of the *Protagoras* see for example: Friedlander, *Plato*; Burnyeat, *Socratic Commentary*; C.C.W. Taylor, *Plato's Protagoras*; Wiengartner, *Unity of the Platonic Dialogue*; and Jaeger, *Paidea*.

²⁰ The dialogue as a whole is embedded in a circular structure which begins with Socrates' meeting an unnamed companion to whom he gives an account of his activity and ends with Socrates leaving to meet his appointment with the unnamed companion. His story, like the *Crito*, begins before dawn with Hippocrates anxiously awaking Socrates to convince him to gain Hippocrates an audience with the famous sophist, Protagoras. The story ends with Socrates and Hippocrates leaving Callias' house because his conversation with Protagoras meets an impasse and he was late for an appointment. Socrates recounts his meeting with Protagoras as an apology for being late. Most commentators also see the meeting with the unnamed comrade at the beginning as random and take Socrates reference to it in the dialogue twice as insufficient to assume that Socrates was supposed to meet the comrade. I see nothing in the dialogue preventing the opening meeting being Socrates' appointment. Socrates meets the comrade inside (a slave boy moves to provide him with a seat) and there appear to be others present. If it is not the twice referenced meeting, it is difficult to see why Socrates mentions it twice during the dialogue and it would make the introductory sequence more disconnected from the dialogue as a whole. If the meeting is random parallels to Socrates' late arrival in both *Symposium* (173 c-d) and *Gorgias* (447a) are lost. With this said, I take the majority of commentator's point that it doesn't appear to be possible to demonstrate either reading with any certainty. All references to *Gorgias* in the dissertation will be to: Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. with intro. notes and interpretive essay by James H. Nichols Jr. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998). All references to *Symposium* will be to: Plato, *Symposium*, translated by Seth Bernardete with Commentary by Allan Bloom and Seth Bernardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

companion, the second is a dialogue between Socrates and Hippocrates and the third is Socrates' description of the gathering at Callias' house.²¹

This section of the thesis will examine each of these prefaces for what they indicate about the core subject matter of the *Protagoras* and our question. In brief, I will show that the first preface is an allusion to the ascent of Diotima's ladder from the *Symposium* and brings to the fore the importance of the beautiful or noble. The second is an allusion to the central images of the *Republic*, more specifically the ascent from the technical education of the auxiliaries to the philosophic education of the guardians. This section highlights the importance of the distinction between the legitimate wiseman and the con-artist who is so important in the central books of the *Republic*. The first two prefaces combined frame the *Protagoras* in terms of two contrasting and related forms of Platonic ascent: toward the beautiful (*kalos*) on the one hand and the good (*agathos*) on the other. The last preface is Socrates' description of entering Callias' house and is an allusion to Odysseus' search for Tiresias in Hades. The allusion when interpreted in the light of the *Apology* invokes Socrates' demonic mission and his defence of philosophy.

2.2.1 A. Socrates' Dialogue with his Comrade 309a - 310a

The opening exchange of the dialogue is between Socrates and an unnamed companion.

We are given very few clues as to the character of the companion. We suspect because of

²¹ Due to the eagerness of most interpreters to arrive at the contest between Protagoras and Socrates, there are relatively few discussions of the introductory sections of the dialogue. As the introduction suggests, my reading of the dialogue argues they are central for understanding what Plato is attempting to demonstrate about sophistry, philosophy and political life. Notable exceptions to this general rule are: Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, pp 18-37 and Wiengartner, *Unity of the Platonic Dialogue*, pp 47-57. Many other commentaries, which were useful in other respects, spent almost no time considering the context see: Friedländer, *Plato*, pp 5-10; Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, pp 67-70; Cropsey, *Plato's World*, pp 3-5; Nausbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, pp 91-94; A.E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work*, pp 289-291; Jaeger, *Paidea*, pp 107-110; and Goldberg, *Commentary* (though conscious of the need to take the dramatic context into account (see p 31) doesn't follow Plato's opening very closely.

his frank questions to Socrates about Alcibiades and his lack of knowledge of Protagoras' arrival in Athens, that he is less concerned with the current novelty which Athens has attracted and more concerned with the potentially improper behaviour of his fellow citizens. The companion's chastisement of Socrates reveals a suspicious tone concerning Socrates' practices in the city.²² The unnamed companion asks Socrates whether he was still 'on the hunt' for Alcibiades.²³ The companion clearly believes that Socrates has indeed been recently hunting for Alcibiades and without waiting for an answer proclaims that Alcibiades has become a man (*andrea*), showing a beard (309a). The companion is trying to shame Socrates for pursuing Alcibiades now that he has reached manhood.²⁴ Socrates refuses to indulge his companion's question and asks whether he doesn't agree with Homer that 'the most charming age is that of an early beard'.²⁵ The companion is not swayed by Socrates' judgment of Alcibiades' charm and returns to his primary concern: whether Socrates had in fact been pursuing Alcibiades. The companion is not open to discussing the correctness of Athenian conventions or even hearing Socrates' defence of pursuing Alcibiades.

Homer's praise of the first bloom of manhood appears in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In both works the praise of the time of youth's first beard is in the context of the delivery

²² This makes it unlikely that he is a usual friend of Socrates, but it is unclear in the text whether Socrates was scheduled to meet his companion and has arrived late or whether this is yet another accidental meeting. Though most commentators note the importance of the *Symposium* in this opening exchange, only Coby develops the importance of the beginning, relative to the *Symposium* in general. See Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, 19-25.

²³ Cropsey completely ignores Alcibiades in his account of the *Protagoras*. see Cropsey, *Plato's World*, pp 3-4.

²⁴ See Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, pp 19-25.

²⁵ *Iliad* 24.348 and *Odyssey* 10.279

of messages: one signalling disaster, the other signalling a plan for escape.²⁶ Though the time when a young man first sprouts a beard may be the fairest it seems it is also the most uncertain with regards to whether they become bad or good. Does Alcibiades' good looks and talent promise relief for the city or danger? The dialogue opens with a playful doubt on whether the beautiful and the good are identical.

There is some irony in the companion's calling Alcibiades a man when he pushes Socrates on the point about his activities, especially the way in which Alcibiades is disposed to Socrates, the companion refers to him as a youth (*menias*). Socrates says that he had indeed just come from seeing Alcibiades and that Alcibiades was well disposed towards him and even defended him recently, but, strangely, Socrates himself 'nearly forgot about him' (309b). The comrade wonders at what could have happened between them and asks whether there was someone more beautiful (*kalos*) in Athens. Socrates' says there was and through a few short exchanges the comrade discovers that Socrates has met Protagoras and that he believes Protagoras to be more beautiful than Alcibiades because, Socrates asks, 'how could wisdom not appear more beautiful' than the bloom of Alcibiades (309b-c)? When pressed about who it was that Socrates has met, he states 'the wisest of any living' on the caveat that it appears so to his companion. The companion expresses surprise that Protagoras has come to town and Socrates offers that he has just been in conversation with him. The companion asks that the story be narrated and

²⁶ In the *Iliad* a messenger of the impending slaughter of the Trojan's is delivered by a man how is in the bloom of youth. In the *Odyssey* Homer praises Hermes disguise as a young man in giving advice on how he and his comrades can escape Circe's house and continue their voyage home. Hermes the messenger god delivers his heavenly messages in the form of the charm of youth at its most fair (*charieis*). See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, p 1 n4; Homer, *Iliad*, 24.348; Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.279.

Socrates agrees and says that he will be grateful if they would listen to his account (309d-310a).

Socrates does not recount the entirety of the visit to Callias' house and Plato decides to let Socrates tell the story rather than present the encounter in the third person. This implies that the clash between Socrates' and Protagoras' is perhaps less important than Socrates' view of the clash. Socrates presentation of his encounter with Protagoras is censored and perhaps this is the case because Socrates, at least in part, is grateful to the comrade to present his story because it will act as a defence against the comrade's implicit charge that Socrates is an inappropriate pederast.²⁷ That Socrates is compelled and grateful to recount the tale through a conversation which began as an enquiry into Socrates' erotic pursuits is not accidental and is highly significant, because it shows the relationship between Socrates' erotic pursuit of youth and his pursuit of wisdom, his philosophy. As the story will soon demonstrate, Socrates' argues he was compelled to see *Protagoras* by a youth who desires to be wise. Socrates' relationship with Hippocrates can only be characterised as that of a father to a son, taking concern and offering council on his education. That the dialogue is not merely about Socrates and Protagoras or even about Socrates' challenges to sophistry is highlighted by the fact that this is not the first or only meeting between Socrates and Protagoras (c.f. 361e with 310b). The fact that Socrates could name all those present at the house suggests that he is familiar with all those present and the fact that those present reorganized the entire room around Socrates'

²⁷ See Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, 21

exchange with Protagoras suggests they are familiar with Socrates' as well as Protagoras' reputation.²⁸

The opening of the dialogue invites us to discover how Protagoras' wisdom could appear as the greatest wisdom and therefore appear more beautiful than Alcibiades' bloom. Though we know nothing yet of Protagoras' wisdom we do know that Alcibiades' bloom appears to be in transition from youth to manhood. It is ambiguous then whether Socrates' was able to 'nearly forget' Alcibiades because of Protagoras' wisdom or because Alcibiades is no longer a promising youth. This question would seem to be answered if we bring into mind Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* where the final presentation of her mysteries is compared to the ascent up a ladder which moves from bodies to minds to knowledge of the beautiful itself.²⁹ This mystery of Socrates' focus of attention in the *Protagoras* would be illuminated by *Symposium* as a maturing and ascent, if it were not ambiguous as to what Socrates' finds attractive in Alcibiades' bloom.³⁰ Socrates' account to the unnamed companion is thus a defence for Socrates' interest in Alcibiades. It is a defence because it attempts to demonstrate that Socrates is more concerned with education than pursuing youth inappropriately as the companion suggests. The suppression and sublimation of *eros* is the opening theme of the dialogue.

²⁸ It is the audience present at Callias' House which gives me pause before accepting Coby's argument that the *Protagoras* is about the development of an unerotic teaching acceptable to an unerotic audience. Though I agree and will argue similarly later, the room is full of characters from the *Symposium* (see Appendix 2). The teaching might be for the unerotic sophists but it will be highly insufficient for lovers of the sophists. See Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, 22-23.

²⁹ *Symposium* 209e-212a

³⁰ Invoking Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium*, it cannot be explained by a sexual desire for Alcibiades' good looks because Alcibiades complains that he could not seduce Socrates (*Symposium*, 217a-e). The fact that Socrates would not be seduced by Alcibiades does not mean that he is not a lover of youth. Socrates, after-all, in the dialogue which immediately succeeds the Protagoras chronologically, the *Charmides*, Socrates (perhaps ironically) expresses physical desire for *Charmides*. Added to this mystery is that the Alcibiades I is set around the same time as *Protagoras* and there Socrates argues that he held off pursuit of Alcibiades until he was precisely at this age, between youth and manhood. See also Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, p 24.

The allusions to Homer suggest that danger surrounds youth of Alcibiades' age but what kind and with what implications is not made clear. We are lead to believe that part of the danger rests in how the older vie for influence over the younger. Soon after this introduction we also learn that the problem is two-pronged: the youth too desire the company of the older in their pursuit of wisdom and recognition in the city. These dangers and the theme of education in the dialogue, especially the education of the gentleman, demonstrate that from the beginning, the dialogue is about education and corruption. That Alcibiades and the Athenian Empire are portrayed at their bloom is surely no accident: their fates are intertwined.

2.2.2 b. Socrates' Dialogue with Hippocrates 310a - 314b

Socrates soon relates to his unnamed companion that it was not Alcibiades that drew him to Protagoras but another youth passionately in search of the teachings of a famous wise man. This youth, Hippocrates, was almost frantic to wake Socrates before dawn to enlist Socrates' aid in convincing Protagoras to take him as student despite his young age. Hippocrates was so anxious to meet Protagoras that he would have come to Socrates late the previous night had he not been fatigued from pursuing a runaway slave. The youth was so excited that he slept only a few hours before leaving to find Socrates. Hippocrates is a son of a noble family of Athens, and though clearly impulsive,³¹ there is a good

³¹ Coby argues that Hippocrates is meant to mimic a debased version of Socratic *eros*. See Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, pp 25-33.

amount of evidence to suggest that Socrates' praise of Hippocrates nature as a match for those his own age, is genuine and that Hippocrates has a promising future (316b).³²

Socrates does not immediately comply with the youth's request but instead asks, observing Hippocrates' spiritedness, whether Protagoras has done him an injustice. Hippocrates agrees he has because Protagoras alone is wise and has not made Hippocrates so. This exchange neatly prefaces a major question of the dialogue: does Protagoras' reputation as a wise man, and his confident and forward claims to live up to his reputation, amount to an injustice? Socrates' entire narration can be read as an assessment of whether Protagoras' reputation is just.³³

Before agreeing to Hippocrates' request he interrogates him on what he expects to learn from Protagoras. He conducts two lines of inquiry. The first is to question Hippocrates in the usual way, asking him to answer what he expects to learn from Protagoras using an analogy to a *techne* or art, which in the typical way ends in *aporia*. The first line of inquiry also leads to Hippocrates' shame, at apparently wishing to become a sophist. Once Hippocrates' concedes his shame Socrates, in a move uncharacteristic of his *aporetic* procedure, suggests another line of enquiry and asks Hippocrates whether it is not a *techne* which he seeks but *padeia* or education.

³² See Weingartner, *Unity of the Platonic Dialogue*, pp 49-50. There Wiengartner notes that Hippocrates' responses to Socrates' questions and his willingness to follow the *logos* to its completion are concrete demonstrates of Socrates' assessment of his nature. Cropsey is not so generous in his assessment calling Hippocrates "a self-centered bumbler" (Cropsey, *Plato's World*, p 4). Cropsey's evidence appears to be based on Hippocrates desire to be wise and his loss of his slave. This assessment ignores Hippocrates' action in the dialogue itself.

³³ Of course the majority of scholars argue that Protagoras' wisdom is bested by Socrates. Though some scholars, even today, have gone through various efforts to restore Protagoras' reputation from the assault implicit in this dialogue. See for example: Edward Schiappa, *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); Norman Roseman "Protagoras and the Foundations of his Educational Thought," *Paedagogica Historica* XI:1 (1971): 75-89.

In Plato's *Republic* the movement from art to education is represented as an educational ascent presented in the allegory of the cave. The significance for the relationship of art to this educational ascent can be found in the divided line. At 511c in the *Republic*, Glaucon gives a summation of the divided line, which Socrates agrees is adequate, where Glaucon associates art with the third highest form of knowledge (*ta mathematica*).³⁴ This is consistent with Socrates' presentation of the cave where there are artificers either displaying or crafting the objects which the prisoners discuss and is consistent with what Thrasymachus' thought he could teach about justice and politics. Since the cave is an allegory for human nature in its education and want to education (514a), a true education would be analogous to an ascent through and beyond the technical arts.

The way Socrates explicitly characterizes education in its relationship with the technical arts in the *Protagoras* is consistent with what I have briefly indicated about the *Republic*. In the *Protagoras* Socrates says:

“But Hippocrates perhaps you don't suppose that the instruction Protagoras offers you will be of this sort but like that gained from the teacher of letters and the citharist and the physical trainer? For you didn't learn each subject from these for the sake of the art – so that you'd become a skilled practitioner of them – but rather for the sake of such an education as befits an amateur and a free man” (*Protagoras*, 312a-b).

The technical arts can be learned for at least two aims: to become educated and free or to become a craftsman. This formulation seems to violate the spirit of much of Socrates' questioning in the *Republic*. Socrates in Book 1 of the *Republic* claims that each art has its proper work and that work is its virtue (353a). What Socrates claims in the *Protagoras*

³⁴ *Republic of Plato*, 551c.

is that the arts have the potential to be directed at a good which is something other than their work. More specifically, higher forms of work lay down what is best for the lower forms of work. Art as art pursues its end but it assumes that end to be good.³⁵ The implication is that an educator orders the right proportion of music, gymnastics and technical training “to benefit the private individual and the one who is free.”³⁶ Whether this benefit is a preparation for politics or philosophy is an open question. Regardless Hippocrates does not know Protagoras nor what will come from being one of his students and so Socrates scolds Hippocrates for not recognizing his ignorance and consulting those he trusts. Socrates’ reprimand is put in the following terms, which are useful to review because they set the terms by which we can judge Protagoras’ teaching.

To judge Protagoras Socrates provides Hippocrates with a definition of a sophist.

“Well then, Hippocrates does the sophist happen to be a kind of wholesaler or retailer of wares by which a soul is nourished? For, to me at least, he appears to be something of this sort” (*Protagoras*, 313c).

Hippocrates then asks what the soul is nourished on. Socrates’ answers learnables (*mathēmasi*) and teaches Hippocrates the danger of purchasing learnables through an analogy of the sophist to a food merchant. As the food merchant does not know which

³⁵ *Republic of Plato*, 600e – 602 a.

³⁶ Socrates’ formulation here is ambiguous on the difference between those who are free and those who are private. Does this ambiguity suggest that one cannot be political ambitious and free? That politics enchains? This ambiguity is also consistent with the distinction between the education of the auxiliaries in book three of the *Republic* and the education of the guardians in book seven. The auxiliaries have no private lives and the guardians are free from the cave. Given the abolition of the private in the *Republic*, one wonders whether anyone could ever be truly free, even in the city in speech. Perhaps, following Socrates’ example, only those who live private lives can be free? But then he is portrayed as being arrested and compelled to speak in many dialogues. Be that as it may, Protagoras and Socrates are not in the *kallipolis*. but in democratic Athens where men aren’t blamed for pursuing their pleasures, whether noble or base (*Republic* 557d-558a). It is democratic Athens, that general store of regimes in which the action of the *Republic* and *Protagoras* take place and both dialogues seem to show Socrates’ attempting to lead young men toward the noble and good and in so doing teach them to be truly free. But if it is impossible to be free and pursue politics then politics would seem to be an highly ignoble pursuit. The question then arises as to whether politics can be noble and good?

foods are best for the body, unless they also happen to be a trainer or doctor, so the merchant of learnables may not know which are best for the soul.³⁷ Socrates emphasises that the same case and caveat hold for the consumers of learnables, but the danger is even more acute. First, because what is concerned is more important: the soul is more important than the body³⁸, and second unlike food, learnables cannot be stored and tested for their worth: they are immediately consumed and digested. Because of this risk, Socrates suggests it is best to go see Protagoras and question him about what he teaches so that they can consult their elders about the worth of the study. It also happens that other sophists will be there and will be available for questioning. Not just Protagoras, but sophistry in general is on trial.

Sophistry, like rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, is not condemned but merely indicted by Socrates. Sophists, who are merchants of learnables, can be deceiving and dangerous when they blindly praise everything they can teach and will teach anything to anyone who can pay. The sophist as merchant views the things he teaches as secondary to the financial reward he charges: his pedagogy is secondary to his love of money. The sophist, thus understood, has the potential to poison the souls of his students as much as he has the potential to heal or strengthen them. Like in the *Gorgias*, where the salutary teaching about rhetoric could be summed up as “as spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down,” the sophist can be redeemed by combining the merchant’s art and the art of caring

³⁷ This is interesting in light of the analogies which Socrates’ uses in the *Gorgias* to distinguish the *rhetor* and the sophist from the legislator and the judge. There the sophist is portrayed as a sham-legislator comparable to a cosmetic-surgeon pretending to be a physical trainer. The suggestion from the analogy in the *Gorgias* is that justice is a corrective art and the legislative art aims at excellence (virtue). The discussion here seems to collapse the distinction between *rhetor* and sophist on the one hand and the doctor and trainer on the other hand made in the *Gorgias*. We will return to this metaphor in the conclusion to this study. See Plato, *Gorgias*, 464a – 466a.

³⁸ This is the first use of this distinction which Prodicus’ later brings up and Protagoras ignores.

for souls. The criteria by which Socrates and Hippocrates will judge the sophists is whether they take any consideration of virtue or their students' souls into account, or in other words, whether they are responsible teachers with some knowledge of the worth of what they teach. That Socrates uses the metaphor of a sophist to a doctor of souls is not accidental. It serves as a direct challenge to Hippocrates: as Hippocrates of Ceos is expert about bodies, so too should Hippocrates, son of Apollodorus, become expert about souls.

What exactly amounts to the art of caring for souls is not explored in the dialogue. In fact, the word soul is used only some fourteen times, nine of which are during Socrates' brief account of sophistry to Hippocrates. The other uses in the dialogue highlight its importance through their relative absence, but do not directly reveal much about the soul. Protagoras argues that it is important that the souls of youths are accustomed to rhythm and melody (326). Protagoras' characterises courage as coming from "nature and the well nurturing of souls" (351). Prodicus characterises the delight from frank exchange as an unmediated exchange between souls (337). Socrates speaks twice about souls and both in terms of their satisfaction. The first was when Socrates asked that Protagoras' satisfy his soul about the unity of virtue (329). The second was his characterisation of the benefit of the hedonistic calculus as being the only true basis for safe action capable of letting the soul rest (336). The calculus is the true basis because it dispels appearances. As we shall see, various affections within an individual are mentioned in the dialogue (pleasure, pain, fear, *thumos*, *eros*) and the hedonistic calculus is only presented as being able to let a soul rest who is ruled by pleasure, pain and fear. Ambition, the kind of ambition characteristic of Hippocrates, let alone Alcibiades, is presented in the Platonic corpus as being

grounded in *eros* and *thumos*.³⁹ Food not only nourishes, but also satisfies. The kind of food one eats depends upon one's appetites and appetites vary by individual, some are stoic and others relish in indulging more lavish pleasures. The question of the suitability of Protagoras' political teaching is first whether it is nourishing and second whether it is satisfying: it must be both to satisfy Socrates' soul.

2.2.3 c. Socrates' Entrance to the Kingdom of the Dead 314c- 316b

The third preface to Socrates' encounter with Protagoras' is his description of Callias' house. The description of Callias' House is presented as an extended metaphor to Homer's presentation of the Kingdom of the Dead in the *Odyssey*. I will argue that in addition to its meaning as a presentation of corruption, this metaphor is also meant as an allusion to Socrates' defence of his pursuit of philosophy in the *Apology*.

As already mentioned Socrates is familiar with those present, but he is also familiar enough with the house itself to know that Callias' father had it remodelled. A striking feature about those present at the house is that no one named as present, except Socrates, is a mature citizen of Athens.⁴⁰ The house is filled with youth and two generations of sophists. Callias' father, if he is still alive, does not appear to be at home. We can only speculate why there are no mature citizens of Athens' named as present. Their absence, however, will allow for a level of candour in the conversation about the government of Athens, which would not otherwise be possible. For Socrates, for example, to apparently criticise Pericles as a father, and even by implication call into question the limitations of

³⁹ See Waller Randy Newell, *Ruling Passion: The Erotics of Statecraft in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp 60-62, 86-93 and the whole of chapter 5.

⁴⁰ See Appendix 1 for a catalogue of the characters at Callias' house in the Protagoras.

all fathers, would not have occurred without a disputation and some danger had there been any Athenian fathers present.⁴¹

The journey into Callias' house is presented as analogous to Homer's account of Odysseus' journey into the kingdom of the dead. The door to Callias' house is guarded by a eunuch who mistakes Socrates and Hippocrates for sophists because he overheard their conversion. As *eros*, or more accurately the absence of *eros*, has already been shown to be important in the dialogue it is important that a eunuch guards Callias' house. The portrayal of the Callias' house as full of shades is striking and surely significant. I leave my comments to an account of the meaning of the analogy to Homer.⁴²

Circe orders Odysseus to go down to Hades to seek out Tiresias, the blind-seer of Thebes, to discover "the way to go, the stages of [his] voyage, how [he] can cross the swarming sea and reach [his] home at last."⁴³ It would seem Socrates' motivation to descend to Callias' house is to search for a wise man.⁴⁴ Socrates' comparison is thus surely meant as metaphoric presentation of Socrates' defence of his love of wisdom in the *Apology*. There Socrates recounts that the Delphic oracle ordered Socrates, or more precisely Socrates interprets the oracle as ordering him, on a mission to find the wisest among the human beings. The comparison of Callias' house to Hades suggests the following: as Odysseus is to Circe so is the Oracle at Delphi (or Socrates' *diamon*) to Socrates. Circe captures Odysseus and seduces him into staying with her for years until Odysseus, compelled by

⁴¹ Socrates may, at this point, be either a new or expecting father. He was 70 years old when he was killed and his sons are said to be just coming into manhood at the time of his death, which would make them around 20 years old, and born around 419 B.C.E. one of the possible dates for the setting of the Protagoras.

⁴² For interesting take on the connection between hedonism and the Socrates' description of Callias' house as Hades. see Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, pp 34—37.

⁴³ Odyssey, 10.594-595.

⁴⁴ *Apology of Socrates*, 20e -22c.

his fellow sailors to leave, eventually pleads with Circe to be free to return home. To find his way home Circe compels Odysseus to descend into Hades to find the blind-seer of Thebes. Socrates, compelled by Hippocrates and permitted by his *diaimon*, descends to Callias' house to find and question Protagoras. Socrates must be compelled as the lure of three of the greatest sophists alone was clearly not sufficient as Socrates knew they were in town before Hippocrates woke him and yet apparently did not go to visit them. Socrates left to his own perhaps would be content to philosophize, as Odysseus was content to stay with Circe. But both Odysseus and Socrates are compelled by their comrades and Socrates is grateful for being compelled to descend among the many.

But the Kingdom of the Dead of the Odyssey is different from Callias' house. Though they both contain a throng of "bodies," in Callias' House there is order to the bodies rather than the throng of spirits which rush to see Odysseus. There are three centers around which the throng organize themselves: Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus. The spirited and ambitious will organize themselves around those who have gained a reputation for wisdom. Hippocrates' already stands as a demonstration of this truth about politically minded youth. More specifically, however, it appears that the young are especially attracted to those who are older and reputed to be wise. This natural attraction is compounded by the fact that fathers also want their children to be educated, but are leery of corrupting studies.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See dramatic context of Plato's *Theages*, 121a-122a. In *Theages* the youth Theages goes as far to argue with his father that he is being done an injustice if he would be forbidden to be sent him to a sophist. At the end of the dialogue Socrates agrees to spend time with the youth provided that his *diaimon* permit him. Plato, *The Roots of Political Philosophy: 10 Forgotten Dialogues*, Edited by Thomas Pangle (Cornell University Press, 1987), pp 132-133.

Socrates' eye follows the crowd from its most ornately organized and complex center to the less ornately organized periphery. Protagoras⁴⁶ is portrayed as being followed by two named groups of three students and others, a mixture of Athenians and foreigners, who gracefully move out of the master's way as he paces and speaks. Socrates does not indicate the subject matter of Protagoras' speech, but likens the manner of his speech to that of Orpheus.⁴⁷ Orpheus was an Argonaut who used his skill with music to save the Argonauts from being lured by the Sirens. He is also reputed, like Odysseus, to have entered and returned from Hades while still alive. Though, unlike Odysseus, Orpheus failed in his mission.

Protagoras' apparent devotees include one of the Thirty Tyrants (Charmides), two of Pericles' sons (Paralus and Xanthippos), who sued their own father, and finally the notoriously rich play boy and connoisseur of sophists, the host Callias.⁴⁸ If a teacher is to be judged by the justness of the actions of his devotees, Protagoras' worth as a teacher would appear to be in question.⁴⁹

After him Socrates beheld Hippias⁵⁰ of Elis who was seated on a throne with four named characters, two Adimantus' and Agathon and Pausanias, in addition to others, who sat on benches around him. One of the Adeimantus' was a general in the Peloponnesian War,

⁴⁶ Protagoras' name could be literally rendered from the Greek as "on the side of the market" or "for the market"

⁴⁷ See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, p 9 n29. Bartlett in his footnote to this section of the text refers the reader to Phaedrus' speech in the *Symposium* where Orpheus' empty handed descent and return from Hades is alluded to (*Symposium*, 179b). More will be said of this analogy when we address Protagoras and Socrates first exchange before Protagoras' Great Speech.

⁴⁸ See the dramatic context of the *Euthyphro*, 2a-4e. *Euthyphro* reference to: Plato and Aristophanes. *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, Crito and Aristophanes' The Clouds*, translated with notes by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West with introduction by Thomas G. West (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, p 4 n11. There he cites *Andocides, On The Mysteries* 124-127, for details about Callias' controversial personal life.

⁴⁹ *Gorgias*, 456a - 457c.

⁵⁰ Hippias' name is related directly to the Greek word for horse.

and Agathon became a prize winning Tragic poet. Pausanias is an historian. Socrates' tells us that Hippias was answering questions about "the nature of the things aloft."

The reference to the *Odyssey* seems to imply that Hippias is to be compared to Heracles. In the *Odyssey* there is no dialogue between Odysseus and Heracles, but Heracles does compare his twelve labours to the trials and tribulations of Odysseus' journey. This reference, and the reference to Socrates' trial, in conjunction with Hippias being the middle of three sophists at Callias' house, suggests that there may be a special relationship between Hippias and Socrates.⁵¹ This special relationship is highlighted even further by the fact that Heracles is another character from Greek myth who entered and returned from Hades while still alive. This suggests that Socrates (Odysseus), Protagoras (Orpheus) and Hippias (Heracles) share a special relationship in the dialogue. If I am correct in my interpretation that Socrates' entrance into Callias' house is modeled on his Delphic quest, then each of these men travels to the darkness of political life, but are truly at home in a higher light. What exactly that light might be in the case of Protagoras and Hippias, let alone Socrates, is unclear. The case of the former is the subject of this dialogue and the case of the latter is presented in two dialogues bearing Hippias' name. The importance of the relationship between these three men is highlighted further at the end of the dialogue with the emergence of the hedonistic calculus which represents a marriage between Hippias' devotion to the calculative arts with Protagoras' exclusively political teaching.

⁵¹ There are two Platonic dialogues which bear Hippias' name in their titles: *Hippias Major* and *Hippias Minor*.

This special relationship is reflected in those who Socrates' names as present listening to Hippias. Phaedrus is in three Platonic dialogues, one of which bears his name. The other two are Eryxmachus, a speaker at the *Symposium* and Andron son of Androtion, who is said to be a student of Callicles.⁵² Eryxmachus' speech in the *Symposium* is most concerned with the things aloft and Socrates' speech seems to incorporate this general principle when he describes love as having a cosmological significance. Hippias would appear to be less of a threat politically than Protagoras but he does have lovers in his audience. The hedonistic calculus must be meant, among other things, to sting those concerned with natural philosophy to turn to human affairs.

Lastly, Socrates espies Prodicus, who is altogether wise and divine,⁵³ and was lying down covered in blankets. He is surrounded by four named characters and others, but Socrates' could not make out the topic of their discussion because Prodicus voice was deep and it reverberated in the chamber in which he lay. Prodicus is directly compared to Tantalus who was punished in Hades for abusing an invitation to eat the food of the Gods. Tantalus was punished by being immersed in a pool but whenever he tried to drink the water vanished. Similarly when he was tempted by ripe fruits on a vine they would disappear whenever he tried to reach for them. Prodicus, though often ironically praised by Socrates, is the only one of the professors at Protagoras' house who is compared to a mythical character who does not travel between earth and Hades: he is at home in the conventional. This metaphor also suggests, in light of Prodicus' failure to distinguish

⁵² *Gorgias*, 487c.

⁵³ Prodicus' name literally means 'judged first' but can take on the meaning of an advocate, avenger or defender.

terms according to their nature in the dialogue, that Prodicus misuses his art. Perhaps only a short course in his art is necessary for the lover of wisdom.⁵⁴

Those portrayed as followers of Prodicus include two of the speakers of the *Symposium*: Pausanias and Agathon. The two are described as lovers by Socrates, and this remark is Socrates' only explicit use of *eros* in Callias' house. The other two bear the same name as Plato's brother, Adiemantus from the *Republic*. Only Adeimantus, son of Leucolophides, is known from the tradition and he was a military leader in the Peloponnesian War and associated with Alcibiades.⁵⁵ Prodicus' devotees imply that he is politically more significant than Hippias but less so than Protagoras. The implicit criticism of his art and Socrates' declared praise of Prodicus' wisdom suggests that, though he is politically less significant than Protagoras, he is perhaps philosophically more significant.

As in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades is the last to enter and he is joined by Critias. With the entrance of these two figures, if the other figures present were not sufficient, it becomes clear that Callias' house is full of those with political and controversial lives. To say nothing of Alcibiades' career, both Critias and Charmides were members of the brutal Thirty Tyrants and closely associated with Socrates. It would seem that the unspoken fourth center of attraction and organization in Callias' house is Socrates himself. This is compounded when we add together other facts cited so far: Phaedrus appears in two other dialogues with Socrates, as does Hippias. Agathon appears as a beloved of Socrates in the

⁵⁴ *Cratylus* 384 b-c. Unless otherwise specified all reference to Platonic dialogues are to: Plato. *Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper with associate editor D. S. Hutchinson (Indiana, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1997).

⁵⁵ See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, p 10 n37.

Symposium, Alcibiades appears in three other dialogues. There are a total of ten dialogues which have characters who are present at Callias' house. If the measure of the influence of a sophist is the number of his associates who rise to high political rank, then Socrates' appears to match Protagoras.

Socrates' account of the organization of the sophists and pupils suggests that those who are famously known to have associated with Socrates also have other influences. This might seem an obvious point but since Socrates is portrayed as more often than not examining and refuting his interlocutors, this order of Hades seems to be an implicit defence of Socrates' activity as it raises doubts about the justice of the charge that Socrates corrupts the youth. The *Apology* itself seems to point to the *Protagoras* when Socrates' tries to distinguish himself from the sophists. In the *Apology* Socrates' says "and if you have heard from anyone that I attempt to educate human beings and make money from it, that is not true either. Though this too seems to me to be noble, if one should be able to educate human beings, like Gorgias of Leontini, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis" (*Apology*, 19d-19e). Protagoras, the most famous of the sophists, is notable by his absence and this is reinforced by Socrates a few lines later when he recounts a discussion he once had with Callias. If this may not suggest Protagoras to the men of Athens, the fact that the *Protagoras* is the only Platonic dialogue which is set at Callias' house does suggest Protagoras to his readers.

To conclude, I wish to return to something noted throughout my discussion of the cast at Callias' house, which is that three of the four main professor figures are compared to characters who visited Hades while they still lived and returned. I have argued that the meaning of the descent to Hades for Socrates is summed up well by Socrates' description

of his Delphic quest in the *Apology*.⁵⁶ The descent down into Hades is away from self-sufficient contemplation and confidence in one's knowledge towards dialogue in search of wise men. As the metaphor is used in the *Republic*, the descent into Hades is also a descent into political life, to the cave of political life.⁵⁷ In the *Republic*, a philosophic few have knowledge of what is outside the cave and Socrates' allusions of Protagoras to Orpheus and Hippias to Hercules suggest that they too have knowledge of the cave. Are Protagoras and Hippias potential philosophers or are they more at home in the cave than outside? Protagoras and Hippias may have had this potential, but the difference between them and Socrates on the terms of the myth is that they are now dead. Protagoras, as Orpheus, leads men with this song in Hades, not above. In other words Protagoras believes that he has seen the nature of mankind in their education and want of education, but in truth he is still chained to the conventions of the city. Prodicus does not aspire to leave the cave because he is the master of the conventions which govern words and is not concerned about the nature which the words are meant to signal. Hippias as Hercules has a more promising fate because Hercules does not reside in Hades, but with Zeus and the Gods: only his image resides in Hades. This seems to be the metaphoric expression of Hippias' concern with the nature of the things aloft: this concern determines his true place with the divine, not with the earthly.

⁵⁶ *Apology of Socrates*, 20e et al.

⁵⁷ *Republic of Plato*, 514a-517b.

2.3 Protagoras' Great Speech ⁵⁸

The initial encounter of Socrates and Protagoras culminates in what is called by scholars, Protagoras' Great Speech. The prefatory encounter to the Great Speech has two parts: a short dialogue on Protagoras' precaution and Socrates' argument 'that virtue is not something that is teachable'. Protagoras' 'Great Speech' is a response to Socrates' argument and is itself divided into two parts: one part which demonstrates its point by myth and one part which demonstrates by argument.

2.3.1 Protagoras' Precaution 316b – 317e

Socrates moves almost immediately to greet and present Hippocrates' to Protagoras as a potential student. Protagoras immediately presents Socrates with a choice: does he wish to discuss privately with Protagoras or in front of others. ⁵⁹ Rather than immediately answering, Socrates offers to let Protagoras decide once he has heard why they have come. Protagoras, perhaps with some curiosity, asks for the reason for their having

⁵⁸ There are many accounts in the literature which examine Protagoras' Great Speech. None which I consulted have dissected the myth to demonstrate that Protagoras' purposely teaches a two part account of virtue, though many argue that his account is contradictory. I will argue that the two sided account of virtue consists of the virtues required to be ruled and the virtues require to rule. Most take the first to be his entire account. I will demonstrate in Socrates' response how much of the discussion later in the dialogue probes Protagoras' desire to keep hidden his teaching about rule. The most useful of the discussions are limited in my view by their focus. Bartlett's focus' is on the Thrasymachean ground of Protagoras' teaching; Miller's demonstrates how aspects of fore-thought and after-thought permeate the dialogue; Coby's though a useful exegesis of the Myth, doesn't attempt to reconcile how various aspects of human being are grounded in the myth. See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, pp 70-76; Miller, "The Prometheus Story," 22-32; and Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*. 53-70.

⁵⁹ This is the second time that Socrates reports that he and Hippocrates' had a conversation which is not reported to his unnamed comrade. Once right before entering Callias' House (314c).and on now when Socrates and Hippocrates "paused over some small matter" (316a). It is a matter of speculation as to what these matters might be, though it seems this second pause is less mysterious than the first in that Socrates has presented us with a vivid description of those in attendance at Callias' House. As for the first report which we are not privy to, it would seem natural that Socrates attempts to clarify further from Hippocrates what he expects in being educated by Protagoras. It is possible that Socrates' characterizing Hippocrates as desiring to become notable in the city was a conclusion from that discussion. This is plausible because Hippocrates clearly did not want to become a sophist but thought the sophist could teach him something of importance.

come. Socrates responds by giving a portrait of Hippocrates, outlining four characteristics of Hippocrates by which Protagoras is to judge Hippocrates and to decide how they should speak. They are, that Hippocrates is an Athenian from a prosperous family, “is by nature a match for those his own age,”⁶⁰ and desires to become notable in the city. Two of the criteria are attributable to nature and two to convention. Socrates’ portrait leaves it open for Protagoras to decide whether it is his conventional or natural characteristics which compel Protagoras’ to agree to their meeting. That Socrates mentions the conventional criteria first and the natural criteria second may suggest that Socrates believes the conventional criteria will be of primary interest to Protagoras.

In portraying Hippocrates’ desire to meet Protagoras, Socrates subtly misrepresents Hippocrates’ intentions. Earlier in the dialogue Hippocrates complaint against Protagoras was that Protagoras was wise and wasn’t making him wise. On the surface it was not Hippocrates’ love of honour or fame which drew him to Protagoras, but his love of wisdom. Given that we are not privy to Socrates’ discussion with Hippocrates on the way to Callias’ House, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the movement from Hippocrates’ love of wisdom to his love of honour is a result of that conversation. It is perhaps not surprising that Socrates does recount these exchanges with Hippocrates to his unnamed companion as they would surely seem to be suspect. A discussion of Hippocrates’ political ambitions could bring the unnamed companions’ fears of Alcibiades and Socrates unconventional relationship to mind, especially if Socrates didn’t directly try to dissuade Hippocrates of his ambitions.

⁶⁰ This is the first use of the word nature (*phusis*) in the dialogue.

Before turning to Protagoras' agreement to speak with them publicly it is worth pausing here to consider what is at stake in speaking privately or publicly, especially given Socrates' statement that Hippocrates' believes that Protagoras possesses some knowledge which makes men notable in the city. First, the question is already asked in front of some of the members of the room, including Callias, his host, and the sons of Pericles. It would undoubtedly be rude to retire the conversation to a more private setting, though it should be noted that it was Protagoras who first offered the option; Protagoras speaks differently to a group of many than to a few in private.⁶¹

Protagoras thanks Socrates for his forethoughtfulness (*promethe*) and then proceeds to display why he believes it is important to consider the question of whether a speech should be public or private. Protagoras is principally concerned with this distinction because of the danger his profession entails. As a traveling foreigner there is no small risk in attracting envy, ill will and even plots from the natives for "persuading the best of the young to forsake the company of others...on the grounds that they will become the best possible through their associating with him." It becomes apparent that Protagoras' initial question was meant as a preface to provide occasion for him to display his account of why he alone openly professes to be a sophist. Protagoras' display about his professional candour is based on a sound judgement of the politics of teaching virtue. Parents are naturally concerned about corrupting influences on their children. And this concern naturally extends to the city as a whole, as the corruption of the youth, especially the best of the youth, will one day lead to a corruption of the city as a whole. That the Athenians persecuted Socrates and Protagoras for corrupting the youth and impiety, demonstrates

⁶¹ *Theaetetus*, 155d.

the very real danger to those who profess to teach or are even reputed to teach. The danger is as real to a native as it is to a foreigner. Parents generally believe that unconventional influences are corrupting influences. The sophists are famously charged with teaching against convention on the ‘things above and below the earth’ and against conventional morality, especially religion. Aristophanes’ play the *Clouds* is a perfect demonstration of this natural conservative concern. The prudential teaching of the play from the perspective of the father is that they ought to be extremely careful about the hopes and trust they place in the sophists to educate their children. The prudential teaching of the play from the perspective of the sophists is that they must take precautions to guard against the potentially negative reaction of the families of their students. The political problem of education amounts to being able to persuade fathers that their teachings are sound. Protagoras’ appears to be a responsible teacher in this respect, if only for prudential reasons, because he acknowledges this concern of parents and claims to have a unique solution to alleviate the concern.

Protagoras’ solution aims to lend respectability to sophistry. The first way is by proclaiming that the ancient poetic authorities like Hesiod, Homer and Simonides were practitioners of sophistry (316c). This is important because the political problem outlined above is generally a concern for conservative or traditionally minded parents. If the art is ancient it is lent respectability, especially if the political, social and religious climate is awash with novelty.⁶² Protagoras then tries to assuage the conservative mind with a novel approach to an ancient art. He proclaims that sophists have always known that their art may breed resentment and they therefore have always created facades to protect

⁶² *Republic of Plato*, 327a-b.

themselves. These facades took on many different shapes; some clothed their teachings in poetry, some in mystery cults and prophecy, some others even with gymnastics and still others with music. The true sophistic teachings of the past were covered by “these arts as concealments” (316e).

Protagoras follows ‘a path the complete opposite of theirs’ by granting that he is in fact a sophist (317b). In addition to his frankness, Protagoras also employs other measures such that “- to speak with god – [he] suffers nothing terrible on account of [his] granting [he] is a sophist” (317b-c). This is necessary, as the ancients’ technique failed: though “the many perceive nothing” the powerful have seen through their concealment. Protagoras argues that the sophists themselves have brought on their bad reputation because concealment is suspicious (This observation has lead Protagoras to openly admit to being a sophist and being able to educate human beings. His approach at least avoids the pitfalls of being caught hiding one’s art. The proof of the success of this method for Protagoras is that he has been practicing the art for many years, such that he is old enough to be father of any of his audience. As is consistent with his openness, Protagoras states that he would be pleased to make the discourse in front of all the others currently present. This might give the impression that Protagoras not only openly admits that he is a sophist but that he also teaches openly. This assumption ignores Protagoras’ first question, but it also ignores the reason which Protagoras offers for teaching to all in the room, “in point of age [he] could be the father of any one of [those present]” (317c).

Socrates then narrates his suspicion that Protagoras’ true motivation is not fatherly concern, but his desire to display before Prodicus and Hippias and the rest who have “come as his lovers”. Socrates’ narration might imply that it is his belief that Protagoras

is a lover of honour and competition. Though this is surely true of Protagoras' character, this is not exactly what Socrates says about Protagoras. His point was that Protagoras was proud that lovers (*erastai*) of his were among the new arrivals. This comment sheds new light on the opening scene at Callias' house. Those groups surrounding the sophists are 'lovers' of the beauty of the wisest. Socrates, apparently wishing to gratify Protagoras' desire to compete with the sophists, offers that they call over the rest to hear. Protagoras answers: "by all means."⁶³ Socrates says of all those present, himself included: "we were all pleased because we were going to hear wise men" (317d).

Though Protagoras does attempt to address the concerns of fathers and citizens through his professing to practice the sophistic art, it is unclear whether he succeeds. The city sees sophists as potential corruptors of youth and Protagoras only attempts to demonstrate how he has discovered a way to be safe in the face of those threats. He never attempts to address how his sophistry would differ from the kind which does or could corrupt the youth. What Protagoras does imply is that the powerful distrust sophists because of their traditional duplicity (317a). Implicit in this defence is that the powerful would find no cause to mistrust sophistry and would even endorse sophistry, as Pericles has, if only it was directly explained to them. Once the sophist has gained the trust of the powerful they need no longer concern themselves with the conservative concerns of the many because the powerful will now defend the sophists rather than persecute them. The failure of Protagoras' openness, and other measures, is shown by the fact that he was exiled from Athens.

⁶³ On the relationship between the love of honour and *eros* see *Symposium*, 208c.

As the agreement is made to have a conversation in front of the entire room, the good host Callias suggests that they arrange the discussion so they can be seated comfortably. In order to affect this rearrangement, the discussion is moved to the area of the house where Hippias is sitting on his throne. Socrates does not say exactly how the men are arranged, but the shifting has the effect of conflating the three or four centres of organization into one, with two points, Socrates and Protagoras, like an ellipse. It is unclear whether Hippias is still sitting “high on his throne” or whether Prodicus still lays down beneath his blankets. It seems plausible that the arrangement would have been made so as to have Socrates and Protagoras at the centre.

2.3.2 Introduction to Protagoras’ Great Speech 317e – 320c

Once the group is assembled Protagoras asks Socrates to repeat “what he had just said on behalf of the young fellow.” Socrates complies by stating “his beginning point is the same” (318a). But Socrates’ restatement of why they came drops any mention of what Hippocrates believes he can learn by associating with Protagoras. Instead he says that Hippocrates “is in the grip of a desire (*tunchanei en epithumiai*) for [Protagoras’] company” (318a). Socrates’ reformulation sets the tone for the whole discussion by placing the onus on Protagoras to make clear what results from his teaching. Socrates’ new formulation of the question to Protagoras refrains from implying anything about the status of Protagoras’ profession. Socrates neither implies it to be an art (*techne*) or an education (*paideia*). Socrates’ sole assumption is that Protagoras’ practice does result in or begin something.⁶⁴ Socrates is willing to use Protagoras’ love of honour to move him

⁶⁴ Liddell Scott says that this word can mean result but also can be more literally rendered as to step off from a place as in disembarking from a ship. (Perseus Project)

to enter into dialogue, and even keep him in dialogue (as we shall see later), but he is not willing to gratify it once agreement to enter dialogue has been made.

Protagoras' response is ambiguous: he states that his pupils will become better and better through their association with him. Socrates interprets Protagoras' answer as implying that his pupils become better because he teaches them something.⁶⁵ This is the first time in Socrates' and Protagoras' encounter that hints of Socrates' famous teaching that virtue is knowledge appear and Protagoras makes no objections.

Protagoras responds by immediately comparing himself to the other sophists; this further confirms our suspicion that Protagoras is a lover of honour. As Protagoras distinguishes himself from the ancient sophists by his superior frankness, he distinguishes himself from his contemporaries by claiming to teach only that which the student has come to learn; he does not force his students to study worthless subjects such as calculation, astronomy, geometry and music. Rather, Protagoras teaches "good council concerning one's own affairs – how one might best manage his household – and concerning the affairs of the city, how he might be most powerful in carrying out and speaking about the cities' affairs" (318e).

Protagoras' speech here is the best account of what Protagoras believes his activity to be in his own words. First, this speech is telling of Protagoras' metaphysics that 'man is the measure' as he does not believe that his political teaching is dependent on the study of nature. The knowledge of nature one would gain through studying these subjects is not

⁶⁵ On consideration Protagoras might wish to challenge Socrates right here as Protagoras' account of skills appears more as training. That knowledge makes men better is not surprising as even painters and flute players make their students better by teaching them painting and flute playing.

required to learn good council in the affairs of the city.⁶⁶ This rejection of the study of nature implies that Protagoras believes that politics, or the affairs of the city, are purely conventional or, more specifically, that convention has no meaningful positive relationship to nature. This is also telling of Protagoras' love of honour as this comment is aimed at Hippias, who was earlier pronouncing on the 'nature of things aloft'" (315c). Second, Protagoras explicitly says that he provides council on "being powerful in both carrying out and speaking about the city's affairs" (319a). Protagoras never proclaims on his own that he teaches a *techne*, though he does believe sophistry itself is a *techne*. It is perhaps for this reason that Socrates never tries to push the technical analogy as he does in other dialogues.

Instead of openly questioning Protagoras as to the meaning of 'good counsel' in the affairs of the city, Socrates goes on to ask Protagoras whether what he means by his speech is "the political art and [he] claims to make good citizens" (319a). Protagoras agrees that this "is the very profession [he] profess[es]" (319a).

With this agreement Socrates presents a proof for why the political art is not teachable, it consists of two parts and is presented from evidence from the activities of actual cities. Socrates argues that the city makes a distinction between politics and art. This is proven in council when they call shipbuilders for advice on shipbuilding but allow those who study any art, from any background, from the rich to the low-born, to make speeches on political matters.⁶⁷ Socrates' argument rests on the fact that there is *no generally*

⁶⁶ This is interesting for numerous reasons which I will attempt to make clear as my study of *Protagoras* continues. The only thing I want to point out now is that Socrates' interlocutor in the *Theaetetus* is both a student of Protagoras and a geometer and therefore this may go some way to understanding the relationship between *Theaetetus* and the *Protagoras*.

⁶⁷ See the Ship of State Image in *Republic of Plato*, 488a-489a.

recognized expert on political matters.⁶⁸ Socrates' argument seems to aim as much at the reputation of sophists as it is a statement about the nature of politics. If the sophists are experts on politics, why haven't they been recognized as such? Of course, some sophists have been recognized for their art, including Protagoras, but Socrates appears to be resting his observation on that fact they are not held to be experts with the same confidence that shipbuilders are held to be experts in the art of ship building.

Socrates' second example is taken from the life of the most prominent Athenian politician of the time, Pericles. Socrates' argues that though Pericles is a good man, he seems incapable of passing this goodness onto those who are under his care. Of course, many wards of Pericles are present at the conversation including Alcibiades, Paralus, and Xanthipus. Socrates' argument would either breed indignation from these youths, or shame. Indignation if they thought Pericles had benefited them, or shame if they recognized the truth of Socrates' accusation. That Pericles' sons sued their father suggests the later. The invocation of Pericles and his sons also forces Protagoras to defend Pericles rather than admit the limitations of the great man.

The indictment rests on the assumption that being good implies that one can make others good too: that being good is the same as being an expert on the good. This will arise again when we turn to Socrates' and Protagoras' competing interpretations of the Simonides quote. I will confine my comments on this matter to the observation that Socrates gives Protagoras an opening here to make a strong argument for his influence. He could argue that Socrates is correct about Pericles, which is the reason why Pericles

⁶⁸ This, of course, does not mean that there is no expert, as the arguments from Book 6 of the *Republic* show. *Republic of Plato*, 488a-489a.

has sent his wards to study with him. Protagoras, after all, has already argued, and will imply again, that he has learnt and is expert in what is properly a father's skill (See 317c and 320c).

Socrates' arguments imply the following: the political art aims at the creation of good citizens and creating good citizens is the same as teaching virtue. This is clearly a problematic way to present the political art. In the ship of state image in the *Republic*, the ruling art is divided into two parts: knowledge of where to lead the city(modeled on knowledge of the heavens) and knowledge of how to lead the city (the pilots' art of ruling over sailors). Socrates here, as well as in the *Gorgias*, interprets the entirety of politics as the education of citizens in virtue, which is not obviously the same as either of the types of knowledge implicit in the ship of state image. The suggestion on Socrates' part is that a properly educated citizen will be able to know both where to lead the city and how to lead the city. Surely this is tautologically true. By definition, if the citizens are properly educated in political virtue, they will have the powers required to rule and be ruled. It may be that what is conventionally considered the political art is for all practical purposes reducible to whether the citizens have been educated properly.⁶⁹ The questions which arise here are: what are the arts of war and peace and diplomacy and household

⁶⁹ The devolution of regimes in the book 8 of *Republic*, if not the education of the guardians, rests on this assumption. See *Republic of Plato*, 543a-562a.

management?⁷⁰ Good citizens, in Protagoras' view, are well counselled in regard to household management as well as the affairs of the city.

2.3.3 Protagoras' Speech I: Mythos 320c – 324d

Protagoras is up to Socrates' challenge and again asks after the form he would like the demonstration to be presented: In the form of a myth, as is proper for one older to teach someone younger, or an argument. Before Socrates can answer, the assembly interjects to give Protagoras permission to present his demonstration in whatever way he thinks appropriate. Perhaps knowing how persistent Socrates can be on this question, Protagoras begins by telling a story, but ends with an argument.

The question is why does he do so? Is his choice of form of argument part of the 'other precautions' he takes to guard against "suffering something terrible (*deinon*)" (317b-c)? Be that as it may, Protagoras also chooses a myth for the first part of his speech because he sees himself as being old enough to be the father of any of those present. It is appropriate that fathers tell their children myths. That Protagoras tells a myth is a demonstration that he believes he is wisest of those present. Socrates will later make sure this presumption is not forgotten. Protagoras divides his speech into myth and *logos* based on the character of the considerations he wishes to address. The myth is predominantly concerned with the origins of man and shows how human beings are distinct from other beings. It is politically expedient to cast these considerations in the

⁷⁰ This seems to be brunt of Aristotle's' critique of Plato in the *Politics* and ironically Machiavelli's critique of ancient philosophy in chapter 15 of the *Prince*. All future citations of Machiavelli's *Prince* will be to: Nicollo Machivelli, *The Prince*, translation by Harvey Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp61-61. All future citations to Aristotle's *Politics* will be to: Aristotle. *The Politics*, translated and with an Introduction, notes and Glossary by Lord, Carnes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1260a26-1266a30..

form of a conventionally recognized myth so as to hide their potentially impious character. For Protagoras' account of the Prometheus myth is by no means conventional.⁷¹

Protagoras' *muthos* is ostensibly aimed at addressing Socrates' claim that virtue isn't teachable. Protagoras' account of the origins and development of mankind divides itself into four eras and a commentary: The eras can be named for the gods which are instrumental in contributing to the well being of human beings. The Primeval era is identified only by the absence of mortal beings. The next era is associated with the work of Epimetheus. These two times together, account for the genesis of mortal creatures. The third era is associated with the actions of Prometheus and marks the first time when human beings are substantially distinguished from the rest of the mortal creatures. The fourth and final era is associated with the actions of Zeus through Hermes and it marks the time when human beings first came together into cities. Protagoras ends the myth by showing how it can be verified in the conduct of Athenians, the people whom Socrates called 'wise.'

2.3.3.1 The genesis of the mortal from the eternal (320c-320d)

Protagoras' says almost nothing about the primeval era. He states that it was a time when there were gods, but no mortal species. The gods are gods first by virtue of their immortality. Protagoras is unclear about which of the conventional primeval gods rules at this time. There is no mention of Cronus and Zeus, only that there was an allotted time when the coming into being of mortal things occurred when "the gods formed them in earth by mixing together earth and fire and everything and as many things as are

⁷¹ See Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, pp 28-52.

compounds of earth and fire” (320c-320d). The ‘gods’ in this part of the tale are thus characterized by their immortality and their power of genesis. Since no gods are named at this point we can infer that fire is the principle which animates and brings dead matter to life. Protagoras appears to be following his kin, the atomist Democratis of Abdera, who according to Aristotle’s *De Anima* held that the soul is a kind of fire.⁷² We are led to believe from these first few lines that Protagoras does not recognize any of the conventional gods. No single god is credited with the creation of mortal species, as the gods as a collective formed them. Once the ‘gods’ were going to lead the mortal species to light, they charged Prometheus and Epimetheus “to distribute powers to all severally, as appropriate” (320d). That ‘they’ (i.e. the gods), charged them to lead them to the light suggests that there was no king or ruler of gods.

2.3.3.2 The division of man from the rest of the mortals (320d-321b).

The second time marks the division of man from the rest of the mortals and man is first characterised by his needs. Once the mortal beings were so composed, the gods charged Prometheus (fore-thought) and Epimetheus (after-thought) to furnish and distribute powers (or capacities) as is fitting. The Primeval gods did not give either Epimetheus or Prometheus instructions on what they considered to be fitting. Epimetheus pleads for the task of distributing the powers and Prometheus accepts the task of inspecting his work. Prometheus appears to lack fore-thought in giving this task to his brother. As the literal translation of their names suggests, this is not a wise division of labour. With that said Epimetheus does well with the dumb mortals, allotting to each a balance of powers to account for their defence, their shelter against the seasons, their nourishment and their

⁷² See Philip Wheelwright editor, *The Presocratics*, (New York: NY: Odyssey Press, 1966), pp 188-191. Wheelwright cites Aristotle’s *De Anima* from 404-406.

procreation. The principle of distribution is meant to be unequal, but proportional to creating a balance between all the mortal species so as to prevent the extinction of any given mortal species. Epimetheus neglects to allot mankind any powers and true to his name he is perplexed when he discovers what he missed after completing his work.⁷³

Epimetheus distributes powers to mortal species to meet four needs necessary for mortals to be preserved from death and extinction.⁷⁴ Each of the four needs is premised on the grounds that living beings will have two basic adversaries: other living beings and the rest of nature. Of the adversaries which are living things, there is competition between members of one's species and threats from other species. Nourishment and procreation are the basic needs, which sustain individual natures and the nature of the species. The need for defence against individual natures and the elements are met by armament and shelter. Armament is needed for defence against one's own species and from attack against other species. Armament is also needed to meet the requirement for nourishment in hunting for food. Shelter represents defence against the rest of nature.⁷⁵ All of the mortal species, except mankind, are composed as a harmony of powers designed for sufficient defence, shelter, nourishment and procreation to ensure their existence. Human nature is "naked, unshod, unbedded, and unarmed" (321c). Nature thus understood does not speak, which does not mean that it is not intelligible. There is a beautiful order and

⁷³ See Clyde Lee Miller for a thoughtful take on the role on fore-thought and after-thought throughout the *Protagoras*. See Miller, *Prometheus Story*, p 22-32.

⁷⁴ An interesting difference between Protagoras' and Aeschylus's myth is that mankind's awareness of their mortality is never taken from them. See Seth Bernadete, "Protagoras's Mythos and Logos," edited with an Introduction by Ronald Burger and Michael Davies: *The Argument and the Action: Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy*. (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p 189 - 192.

⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that Protagoras says the seasons are sent by Zeus. This implies that Zeus does only represent convention in the analogy, but rather stands in for that which rules the Cosmos. Mankind, though dependent on convention fits into the Cosmos by virtue of convention. In this light convention appears as a kind of second-nature for mankind.

balance to the natural world, but this balance does not incorporate human survival. Human beings must work *against* nature and chance for their survival. The study of nature therefore, though possible, is useless for human beings as a guide for how to live. And so, accordingly, Protagoras' does not teach his students 'calculation, geometry, astronomy and music' (318e).⁷⁶

It should be explicitly noted that Protagoras quickly moves from describing Epimetheus' activity as distributing powers (*dunamis*) to distributing natures (320e). This, in conjunction with our suspicion that Protagoras holds something of an atomist's view of nature, justifies interpreting the Epimethean part of the story as the account of human nature. In defining human nature, Protagoras also shows something of what he thinks of nature *per se* and that is that nature is power (*dunamis*). This is confirmed in Protagoras' logos when natural powers are described as those which are exercised automatically or by chance (323c). More specifically, nature itself is composed of the power of deliberate genesis characterised by the gods' act of creation and those powers which arise either automatically or by chance. But if 'the gods' are only immortal atoms charged with the power of genesis then, as we shall see, only men are capable deliberate genesis.

Nature in its relationship to mankind can be grasped as follows. Mankind as a living nature is a composite of fire and earth. We later discover that human beings are different from the rest of living nature because they also have the powers of art, shame, right and law. More specifically, we discover that Epimetheus did not portion our capacities to be in harmony with the rest of nature. Strictly speaking on Protagoras' account, human

⁷⁶ In this light see Socrates' accusation of Callicles that part of his lack of respect for justice and moderation is his neglect of geometry. See *Gorgias* 507e-508a.

beings have no capacities from nature, in other words, no nature at all. This seems to be consistent enough with three of the four dimensions of Epimethean nature: shelter, defence and nourishment. We need art to hunt, fight and build homes, these can be characterised as natural needs rather than natural powers or capacities. Recall that nature for Protagoras is power (*dunamis*). Human beings, on Protagoras' view, have no natural capacity which cares for their nourishment, shelter and defence. This seems plausible enough. Shelters must be built, food must be found and prepared and defence is nearly impossible without weapons. If this seems implausible then the case of procreation must be all the more so. Human beings (as a species) clearly have a need for procreation and, contrary to Protagoras' implications, all the capacities required to be successful are given by nature. The desire to procreate and the means thereunto are satisfied by human nature. This is true regardless of the fact that art is surely required to educate and civilize human beings. Protagoras' view of man as in opposition to nature cannot account for mankind's natural need to procreate. As with the dialogue as a whole, Protagoras' view of nature is *de-erotized*.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Returning to the myth, there is also an ambiguity in Protagoras' account regarding the origin of speech. The myth seems to teach that human beings could not form articulate speech and names until after they were given the arts by Prometheus (322a). But the distinction between the dumb (*ta aloga*) and not dumb is apparently prior to Prometheus' gift (321c). The ambiguity rests on the equation of man as not non-rational (*aloga*) and man as capable of forming articulate speech and names (*phônên kai onomata tachy diêthrôsato*). The ambiguity is perhaps reconciled if we argue that mankind, though rational before Prometheus, was artful and rational only after Prometheus. Mankind before Prometheus was not non-rational and not productive. The ambiguity, in other words, rests on the equation of *techne* with logos or more precisely on whether names (*onomata*) and speech (*phonen*) can be rational (*logos*) but not articulate (*dierthrosato*). We need Prodicus' skill to settle this matter. I leave the matter as follows: the power of speech and artful wisdom is modeled on the natural power of genesis and the natural power is required to acquire the artificial. If the subterranean gods represent the power of genesis than speech could be attributable to nature's power of genesis and this is one meaning of what Protagoras means by man having a divine portion. But this would mean that mankind did acquire speech by nature and not art and that nature would be divine and not art. Mankind's power of speech demonstrates their power of creation. Not just coming into being by chance or automatically like the other animals, but by design. This power of speech ought to be distinguished from speech governed by art which will not come into being until the power of artful wisdom is given to human beings. The important distinction for our purposes now is that the power

2.3.3.3 Man: The mortal with a 'divine' portion (321b-322c).

Man's needful nature prompts Prometheus to steal the power of artful wisdom and fire from Hephaestus and Athena to give mankind the means of living. Prometheus steals these powers from the gods in their dwelling where they are said to *ephilotechneitên* (321e). Most translators render the word as 'practice their arts' but a more literal translation would be to love their arts. Protagoras' appears to be signalling that the practice of the arts is divine and thus worthy of emulation. The reason the arts appear divine is because they seem to mimic the power of deliberate *genesis* which the gods are said to possess. Protagoras says that mastery of fire is required to obtain artful wisdom (*entechnon sophian*). If we are correct in assuming that fire is the principle of motion which gives dead nature life then the theft of the mastery of fire represents man's mastery of his naturally given power of *genesis*. Although art would appear to give mankind god-like power, Prometheus' theft only provides the necessary but not sufficient condition for mankind to live: for he also requires the political art. Prometheus' desire was to give man both, what was necessary and sufficient, but he had neither the time nor the skill to enter Zeus' citadel which was guarded by fierce guardians.

Protagoras then cites the common myth of the reason for Protagoras' punishment. In the common myth the power of fire was not stolen from Athena and Hepheastus, but rather from Zeus himself. Fearing this revenge and suspecting trickery from Zeus, Prometheus

of creation is attributable to nature but not convention or art on Protagoras' view. This, however, flies in the face of much of Protagoras argument that art and convention ought to be given primacy over nature because they meet our needs as human beings. But if speech has its origin in nature and not art then it is plausible that there is a natural ground for human association. Convention and art would have to be understood as being grounded in nature and therefore not arbitrary. Protagoras' conception of nature is thus problematic on two grounds: it cannot account for eros and it cannot consistently account for man's capacity for speech. In order for Protagoras' view of politics to be convincing, eros must be politically insignificant and speech must be totally and utterly arbitrary.

pleaded with his brother not to accept any gifts from Zeus. Epimetheus forgot his brother's advice when he was presented with Pandora (literally all-given because she was created with the assistance of all the gods) who had a box which was full of a throng of evils as well as hope. Pandora's box was famously opened, unleashing ceaseless hardship on mankind and leaving them only false hope. This was so that "men will be glad of heart while they seek their own destruction."⁷⁸

This tale represents the origin of the full division of mankind from the dumb (*aloga*) mortals. First, because mankind alone shares in a "divine portion" and has a kinship with the gods, he builds alters and images of the gods.⁷⁹ Mankind's piety stems from his recognition that he shares a 'divine portion.' If the strengthening and self-control of mankind's power of genesis is hubristic then it is not surprising that this stirs in men the desire for piety. It is not surprising because men on this account desire nothing more than safety. Piety is mankind's way of making peace with the gods, in recognition that they unjustly acquire the use of the arts. However, if it is true that men really possess the power of the gods there is no reason why men would not believe it desirable to declare war on the gods. The only thing which prevents this is that mankind has not yet been given the art of politics, a part of which is the art of war. The origin of mankind's piety is double. On the one hand it is man's recognition that their power is stolen and on the other the recognition that their power is insufficient to dethrone the gods.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, II, 54-59. All references to Hesiod, *Works and Days* will be to: Hesiod, *Works and Days*, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1914 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/works.htm>).

⁷⁹ For Hesiod's account of the divine origin of man see the *Works and Days* 106.108. This myth is the basis for the myth of the metals from *Republic* Book 3. *Republic of Plato*, 414c-417b.

⁸⁰ Hesiod's *Works and Days* 108-201.

With the possession of art, mankind developed articulate speech and, through speech, nearly all that is required for their survival. They invented dwellings, clothing, shoes, bedding and nourishment to meet man's natural need for food and shelter. What mankind lacked was the power to defend themselves against beasts and other men. Speech suggested to men that they could found cities to protect themselves against both, but every effort to found cities failed because of the natural injustice of men. Speech and art, though of a divine portion, was not sufficient to compensate for the deficiency of the natural condition of man.

Art completes half of nature because it provides for nourishment and shelter. Neither Art nor nature can account for mankind's defence. Mankind's defence from both beasts and men requires the political art. The political has at least two parts: the art of war and the art of founding and maintaining cities. Art suggests these as solutions to mankind's needs, but art alone is insufficient to provide the means. Man, with his natural capacities and the capacity for art was defenceless against the beasts and the injustices of his fellow man.

2.3.3.4 Man under the law of Zeus (322c-322d)

After Prometheus' punishment Zeus feared mankind's destruction and therefore sent Hermes to bring "shame (*aidos*) and right (*diken*) to human being in order that there be principles of order in cities and unifying bonds of friendship" (322c).. These powers are meant to make possible the suggestions which art proposed for mankind's safety. Convention, unlike art, is distributed to all equally. This is necessary because all must share in the city for it to exist and persist. Not only is the power of convention given to all men, but Zeus himself lays down a law that "he who is not able (*dunamenon*) to share in

shame and right is to be killed as a pestilence to a city.” Convention then is not absolutely necessary to every individual but necessary for almost all individuals for the sake of the survival of the species.

Protagoras is sure to note that Zeus possesses the political art in his citadel but he never says that his gift of shame and right amounts to the political art. Principles of order and bonds of friendship are not the whole of political virtue. Most commentators assume that shame and right amount to Protagoras’ argument for the political art.⁸¹ To see the limitations of equating the political art (*techne politike*) with the capacities (*dunamis*) for shame (*aidos*) and right (*dike*) we need only observe that the mere capacity for shame and right do not appear to be enough to account for how those capacities are used in political life. Protagoras’ never argues that all share in the political art (*politike techne*) equally. Men only must appear to share in the law (*nomos*) equally. The political art, which Protagoras possesses, is still only held by the few, though the capacity for shame and right are required for obedience to law which was the missing necessary condition for the establishment of cities.⁸²

Art, convention and nature are all understood in relation to capacities or powers. Mankind was not given a harmonious set of natural capacities. Art gives to mankind a ‘divine portion’ and allows deliberate genesis. The power of art allows man to satisfy many aspects of their disharmonious and needy nature. Convention, or law, is needed to found cities but human beings left only to art and to nature have no capacity to follow it. For this reason shame and right are given to human beings with the proviso that to prove

⁸¹ See for example Cropsey, *Plato’s World*, p 12.

⁸² See Stanley Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist: the Drama of Original and Image*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) pp 25-26.

incapable of them by disobeying the law is to bear the penalty of death or exile. Art and convention are meant to make up for man's nature. The arts are distributed unequally among men but with the end of one man being able to satisfy the needs of many men. Is it this aspect of art which suggested to men the founding of cities?⁸³ Convention is distributed among men as nature is distributed among the animals: to all equally. In this sense convention is mankind's second nature. It is not man's first nature because convention does not come about automatically, which is not to say it does not inevitably come about, only that it requires human activity to come into being. Convention is man's second nature which requires his cooperation to come into being. As we shall see, as a second nature it is wholly dedicated to the preservation of the man's first and defective nature.

2.3.3.5 The Wise Athenians (322d -324d)

This understanding of the relationship between nature, art and convention is meant to apply "not only to the Athenians but the rest too".⁸⁴ Since Socrates brought up the Athenians in his speech, and one of the obstacles of a foreigner teaching virtue is that he is not likely to understand the native conventions, Protagoras takes up the practices of Athenian democracy.

The fact that convention rules cities through shame and right explains why the Athenians are correct in allowing artisans to speak on matters of craftsmanship and allowing everyone to speak on deliberations about political virtue. This is the case because much

⁸³ See founding of the city in speech in *Republic of Plato*, 369b-369e.

⁸⁴ Protagoras' may try and shape his arguments to appeal to his Athenian audience, but his account of politics is meant to be universal and applicable to all Greeks, Athenians as much as Corinthians and Spartans. This is the case because rule, even in a democracy is conducted by a few individuals and these individuals must possess the art of rule.

of any political deliberation involves appeals to moderation and justice, which hold their power through the conventions necessary for the cities' survival. Here Protagoras begins to show how the mythical account connects with the virtues required to make good citizens. As shame and right are necessary to ground the law, so too must "advice having to do with political virtue...as a whole follow the path of justice and moderation." And Protagoras explicitly states that it is proper "that everyman have a share in this virtue, at any rate, or else there will not be cities" (322e-323a).

Protagoras then provides "additional evidence" in case his audience "suppose [they] are being deceived that all human beings really believe that every man shares in justice and the rest of political virtue" (323a-b). Protagoras provides an additional proof for why all men believe that everyone partakes of political virtue. Protagoras' proof rests on the analogy that political virtue is the same as the virtue required to play the *aulos*. Protagoras is explicit that the analogy to *aulos* players could be substituted for any *art*. The proof rests on how men blame false-experts in the arts versus how they blame political vice. In the arts, men are blamed, admonished and even considered mad if they claim to be expert at an art but are not. In the case of the virtues, where everyone is expected to be an expert, men are blamed and considered mad if they openly admit that they are unjust. These men are mad for telling the truth before the many because to openly admit injustice is to violate the necessary condition of the city, which is that all must participate in right and shame. This argument makes clear that Protagoras only defends the appearance of practicing the virtues. It is still possible that a citizen could determine that artful injustice is moderate and well advised.

Protagoras then moves to the question of whether virtue can be taught. Protagoras' argument here rests on his interpreting Socrates' prior belief that virtue did not come about from any human care to mean that virtue came from nature. Protagoras thus reveals that by nature he means that which occurs "automatically". His proof has two parts. The first part of Protagoras' proof is that human beings do not get angry, or teach, or admonish, or punish people for bad characteristics which they possess due to "nature and chance (*tuche*)" (323c). The typical reaction "to the ugly or small or weak" is pity (323d). The second part of the proof is in regards to what men actually do blame. When the good is believed to be acquired from care, exercise and teaching, and there are those who lack this good, the reaction is always to admonish, punish, and teach. In this way when people display injustice or impiety "and all that is opposed to political virtue" everyone reproaches them. In short, the very fact that vice is blamed means that virtue can be acquired through human diligence.

Protagoras is silent about the praise of the virtues. The proof leaves the question open as to the grounds for praise. Is it that Protagoras is offering a kind of version of justice where only those things earned through diligence are properly praised? Can someone be praised or admired for those things acquired automatically or by chance, in a word by nature? Is it proper on Protagoras' account to praise a good nature or being born into a good family?

Protagoras finishes the case that virtue is acquired by human diligence by reflecting on punishment. Protagoras argues that punishment cannot be understood as a retribution for a past act. This, Protagoras argues, is to act like a wild beast. All rational punishment is aimed, not to the past which cannot be undone, but to the future as warning to criminals

and others that criminal acts ought not to be done. It is not clear at first, what exactly this account is meant to add to Protagoras' proof. Protagoras has already demonstrated that people believe vice is blameworthy because virtue is a product of human diligence. By diligence, Protagoras refers to teaching, punishing, and practice. Protagoras' focus on punishment is because it is not clear that punishment is meant to correct unlawful action. Punishment is wild justice when it is only concerned with revenge. This is the case because for Protagoras injustice is wrong because of its consequences. Since the act cannot be undone, punishment only makes sense as a warning to the criminal and those who observe the punishment. Punishment as deterrence is thus to be understood as "an education." Deterrence only teaches that there will be bad consequences should you be unjust and get caught. Nothing is taught about why it is bad to be unjust. More to the point, nothing is strictly taught when punishment is understood in this way. Dogs as well as men can be 'trained' through punishment to follow rules. If political virtue can be acquired only through punishment then justice, piety, moderation and the rest of political virtue would be nothing much to praise.

To this point Protagoras claims to have established through his *muthos* that the Athenians, Socrates' fellow citizens, believe that virtue is something teachable. Protagoras signals next that he will turn to Socrates account of why good men who are wise do not seem to be able to make their sons as good as them. This account, Protagoras says, will be provided by the *logos*.⁸⁵

To sum up Protagoras' mythos, nature in general is understood as *genesis*. Genesis by nature is either by *chance* or *automatic*. Automatic genesis represents all natural

⁸⁵ This is a sign that Protagoras takes Socrates' arguments as worthy of being dealt with on an equal basis.

functions which occur with predictable regularity. Genesis by chance represents those natural occurrences which do not appear with regularity. Human beings in so far as they have bodies are composed of automatic nature. Human beings are not only nature but have also have capacities for art, speech, shame, and right. Nature itself, though meaningful for the dumb beasts, has no human meaning. The power of the arts combined with the capacity for right and shame are what ground what is known as political virtue. In the *mythos*, Protagoras is unclear about which virtues are included in political virtue. He explicitly says that advice on political virtue must follow “the path of moderation and justice” (322e-a) and that this seems to mean one must appear to be, or claim to be, moderate and just. Later in the account, political virtue in the minimum requires that you not be suspected of impiety (323e-a). As a whole, political virtue appears to follow the law, or more specifically, “to share in shame and right.” Nothing in the *mythos* refers to the arts which would be most helpful in being able to give council on the cities’ affairs. Nothing is said of the art of rule, the art of war, or the art of legislation. To this point ‘political virtue’ is reduced to the minimum conditions required to participate the city.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ To conclude this brief summary of Protagoras’ great speech it is worth noting that Protagoras’ version of the Prometheus’ myth differs in some major respects from the version passed down to us from Hesiod. One of the most striking differences in the account is that Prometheus does not rob Zeus, but instead robs Athena and Hephaestus. Protagoras argues that Prometheus couldn’t have robbed Zeus because he didn’t have enough time and the citadel was too well guarded. This seems to imply that there are two different sources of virtue: one conventional which grounds moderation, justice and piety and one other which is convention mixed with art as a ground for courage and good council. The virtues seem to be unified in that they are all powers or capacities. There would thus be at least three different kinds of virtue on this account: virtue by nature, by art and by convention. There also seem to be virtues which involve groundings in both: such as political virtue which includes an aspect of art and convention. On the whole, however, all the virtues are grounded in man’s deficient nature. Complete virtue, the kind of virtue which Protagoras’ teaches, surpasses both Zeus and Prometheus in completing Epimetheus’ neglect of human nature.

2.3.4 Protagoras' Speech II: Logos 324d - 328 d

Protagoras' *logos* aimed at explaining Socrates' observation that good fathers don't seem any better than other men at making their sons virtuous. Protagoras' *logos*, as opposed to his *mythos*, shows how good citizens come into being. The myth's primordial history grounds politics in the ontological categories of nature, art and convention. It remains to be seen how a good citizen can be seen to come into being from his account of human being.⁸⁷

2.3.5 Nurture in common virtue (324d-326c)

Protagoras begins by summarizing his *mythos* in the form of *logos*. All members of the city must partake in 'something' in common for the city to come into being. This thing is not human nature because human beings are by nature unjust. This thing is not an art because the arts themselves are not sufficient to establish the city.⁸⁸ The one thing which all in the city must partake in is political virtue, which is composed of the virtues of

⁸⁷ See G. B. Kerford's discussion of the relationship between the *mythos* and *logos* in "Protagoras' Doctrine of Justice and Virtue," p 42-45. There Kerford argues that the *logos* is an alternative to the *mythos* not a continuation. What Kerford seems to miss is that Protagoras deals with origins in his myth and with the development of the powers accounted for in the myth in the *logos*. The account of education in the *logos* takes as given the conventional powers of *dike* and *aidos* and shows how cities develop them in the education of their youth. After showing how the youth are educated in both *dike* and *aidos* the *logos* adds the power of punishment as the final motivation for men to obey. This is even implicit in the *mythos* in so far as Zeus' law must be enforced by men.

⁸⁸ This can be understood in distinction to the city in speech in the *Republic* which was built initially on the premise that man's nature is in need of much, but that a community can be formed on the basis of mutual need. Convention as such is not needed to stabilize the city. The virtues of justice seem to be implicit in the necessity for exchange and trade in the city and moderation comes from the lack of excess goods. The arrangement itself is what begins education in these virtues. The difference between Protagoras' city and the origin of the city in the *Republic* stems from their different assumptions about the nature of mankind. Protagoras assumes that man is by nature unjust and immoderate while *Republic* assumes that injustice and immoderation are not possible until the means for immoderation and injustice are present. Protagoras' position is interesting in that Protagoras' myth takes into consideration that the arts are proportionately distributed for mankind's mutual benefit. This is perhaps why the arts can suggest the need for a city but cannot achieve it without convention, which is something which *Republic* assumes automatically comes into being.

justice, moderation and piety. Protagoras sums this virtue up as ‘manly virtue.’ All in the city – child, man and woman - must either be seen to partake of this virtue or be subjected to punishment and teaching. If punishment and instruction prove ineffective they must be either exiled or killed. Since the acquisition of political virtue is a question of life or death it would be exceedingly strange if fathers didn’t take the utmost care in teaching their sons virtue.

Political virtue taken all together is ‘manly virtue.’ It is strange, to say the least, that Protagoras believes that ‘child, woman⁸⁹ and man must partake of political virtue which can be summed up as ‘*manly* virtue’. Since woman and children do not rule in Athenian assemblies or vote in Athenian elections what status could this virtue have? This understanding of political virtue seems tantamount to following the laws of the city. Nothing so far has been said about how good citizens participate in the characteristic activities of manly virtue: fighting wars or deliberating about great enterprises. Can we really believe that this is the entirety of Protagoras’ account of the kind of wisdom which Pericles acquired for politics? Protagoras will return to these problems with his account thus far and will drop several clues about how he would begin to address them.

Protagoras begins his account of how good citizens come into being with the family.⁹⁰ First, at the earliest of ages, nurses, mothers, tutors and fathers all aim to ensure the child

⁸⁹ There are only two mentions of woman (*gune*) in the *Protagoras*. The second use (at 342d) is in Socrates’ interpretation of Simonides’ poem, which can be read as Socrates direct response to Protagoras’ Great Speech. There Socrates says that both the men and women of Sparta pride themselves on their education. This seems to be meant as a reproach to Protagoras having identified the need to educate women in political virtue, but having neglected to account for how this education might differ from ‘manly virtue.’

⁹⁰ See Bernadette. “Protagoras’s Myth and Logos,” 195-197.

will be best by pointing out, through and work and speech (*ergon kai logon*)⁹¹, what is just and unjust, noble and base, pious and impious. If the child does not obey this instruction it is drilled into him through threats and blows “just as if he were warped or bent wood.” The earliest instruction of children in virtue for Protagoras amounts to teaching them to speak. Unlike in the myth where the power of speech is acquired by a hubristic act, in the logos it appears natural. Unlike in the myth, speech is most importantly directed toward teaching children to be able to distinguish all the conventional meanings of the virtues. The just and pious are relatively straightforward given what Protagoras has taught to date. The just is simply whatever the law prescribes and the pious is whatever the religion of the city prescribes. The meaning of noble and base is more ambiguous. Because different cities praise and blame different goods, some wealth, and some military valour, what they hold to be noble and base will correspondingly vary from city to city. Instruction in these matters will typically shape a youth’s ambition more than his justice or piety. This is necessarily the case because if justice and piety are to be taken seriously they must be considered to be noble and good. This theme will be explored further as my commentary continues.

After their children have grown sufficiently, fathers send them to teachers to further watch over their sons’ good conduct, more than they are to their sons’ studies in letters and music. At the point where the child is about to learn to understand the written word, “the teachers set before them at their benches the works of good poets to read and they compel their students to memorize them” (325e). By memorizing the works of the good

⁹¹ I do not follow Bartlett’s translation here. The word for ‘deed’ in his translation is not the same as was used in Protagoras earlier claim that he teaches men to be powerful in ‘speech and deed.’ I follow the Liddell Scott from the Perseus Project’s definition.

poets the children then learn many good praises and admonitions of good men which they will be compelled to emulate.⁹² Protagoras does not say which of the poets the children ought to learn. We are led to assume he means the works of Homer and Hesiod, those ancient sophists whom Protagoras earlier criticised. But if the powerful were suspicious of the ancient sophists and they were thus in danger, why do all in the cities still learn from their works? Is Protagoras' honesty a defective tool for securing his safety? Doesn't the fame of these poets argue that it is known that they veiled their sophistry in the arts?

Be that as it may, Protagoras then argues that after the tales are memorized children learn moderation from their music teachers as the tales of good poets are put to music. An education in music makes a child's *soul* gentler by being compelled to make their own rhythms and melodies. In addition, Protagoras argues that "by becoming more rhythmic and harmonious [their souls will] be serviceable in point of speaking and action" (326b). This musical education is an instruction in nobility because it provides the child with a proper sense of conventional grace and beauty. It is also the only time when Protagoras speaks of the souls of the citizens of the city. What must the soul be for Protagoras as the word was never used in his *mythos*? It must be important for him as he associates the soul with rhythm and harmony and "human life as a whole requires good rhythm and harmony" (326b). As cited earlier, Protagoras' only other use of the word soul is when he states that courage comes from the nurturing of souls. As he later argues that courage is the highest virtue, it is strange that nothing more is said. I will return to this in my conclusion.

⁹² Socrates employs this very technique in his discussion with the comrade when praising the best age of a young men.

In addition to learning letters and music, children are sent to trainers to develop better bodies for service of their minds and especially to guard against cowardice. Though the body is given by nature it can be cultivated by art through training. It is interesting that Protagoras cites gymnastic as a guard only against cowardice (326c).. The implication seems to be that irrational fear is given by nature and cannot be brought into check through training in convention as with immoderation, injustice and impiety. The word used in the text for a coward is *apodeiliaô* which the Liddell Scott offers as “flinching from danger” as an alternative meaning to cowardice. This rendering implies that physical training helps against cowardice by strengthening control over natural or impulsive reactions. The assistance that gymnastic provides against cowardice is not so much what it teaches about what is properly feared, but rather that it conditions a kind of physical capability for steadfastness in the face of danger. Artful training can control or suppress automatic nature.

To this point Protagoras has given an account how nearly all Greek children are nurtured to be just, moderate, pious. They have also been nurtured to be resilient to cowardice “in both wars and in other actions” (326c). Protagoras argues that political virtue taken together is manly virtue, and near the center of Protagoras great speech we are finally introduced to courage. Political virtue can be summed as manly virtue because political virtue at its height requires courage in war and other actions. Protagoras does not elaborate what these actions may be, but we can see now that political virtue at its height for Protagoras is not reducible to obedience to the laws. Protagoras, after-all, argues he can teach men to be powerful in both deed and speech.

2.3.6 Good Fathers and Paltry Son's (326c-328d)

The child's, or rather, now the young man's education, continues after being freed from study. At this point the city itself compels the young to learn the laws and follow them as paradigms so they don't follow the random dictates of their inclinations. Protagoras then draws an analogy between learning to read and write and learning "to rule and be ruled" under the law. Acting according to law is like learning to write letters. As one learns to form each letter and memorizes them, writing becomes second nature. And as a student of letters makes mistakes and is corrected by the teacher of writing, so too is the student of the laws corrected by the punishments which the law prescribes. The analogy suggests that to step outside the law is to become as incomprehensible as a deformed letter in writing. As a deformed letter is incomprehensible, breaking the law is mad. Learning the laws provides a model for how to interact with your fellow man and becomes the basis for all safe interaction.

It is here that Protagoras first mentions rule (as opposed to being ruled) and the origin of the laws of actual cities. The laws were invented (*heurēmata*) by the legislators of old. Of the famous legislators of old, only Solon is referred to in the *Protagoras* and he is characterized by Socrates as a lover of the Lacedaemonian education (434a). Protagoras though a legislator himself, never mentions an ancient legislator. The closest he comes is when he mentions Zeus in his *muthos*.⁹³ Because Protagoras provides no example of a good legislator, it is difficult to evaluate what exactly he might mean by 'ruling' according to the laws. It could be he simply means that citizens in pursuing political careers ought not to violate the way the laws have established the ruling offices of the

⁹³ See Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, p 47.

city. In this way, Protagoras would seem to be arguing against the aspirations of tyrants and for a kind of conservative adherence to tradition. On Protagoras' terms, any rule which was lawful would appear to be just and moderate. But as the extreme politics of Peloponnesian War shows, if regular politics does not, governing is not automatic. Judgment and prudence are required to apply the laws to concrete circumstances. It is precisely this judgment or counsel which Protagoras appears to be professing to teach.

In these five ways, through education in speech, in poetry, in music, in gymnastic and, finally, in the laws themselves, a youth is taught to be virtuous and a politician is taught to rule. Based on this account, Protagoras proclaims that it would much more surprising to find that virtue was not teachable given the myriad ways which have been outlined of how a child is taught.

The remaining perplexity to explain is why good fathers raise sons who are not good or at least not as good as their fathers. To explain this, Protagoras argues that because everyone aims to teach justice and virtue, it must be good for those who teach it. To explain this, Protagoras returns to making a comparison between the skill required to play the *aulos* and political virtue. If everyone needed to be a good *aulos* player then all in the city would aim to make everyone as proficient at playing the *aulos* as they could. So too, it is with the lawful and just things that no one conceals anything. So if everyone sought to play and teach the *aulos* with eagerness and generosity, could it be expected that the sons of good *aulos* players would be any better than paltry ones? Protagoras does not think so.

The argument relies on a distinction between gifted natures (*euphuestatos*) and ungifted natures (*aphuês*). Protagoras states that simply because sons are not as good as their fathers it does not follow that sons were not taught virtue; it only means that the sons were less capable than their fathers by nature. This part of Protagoras' *logos* seems to modify what we took earlier to be his account of nature. On the whole, Protagoras argued that nature gave nothing to human beings to suit them for living in cities. This was taken to mean that the virtues of men were grounded in some combination of convention and art. On reflection this does not quite follow. The *muthos* only showed that mankind is not by nature a political animal, as he is political by art and convention. Protagoras' reason was that nature is what is automatic or by chance. While mankind as whole cannot be considered to be gifted by nature, individual men can be gifted by nature. Art and convention, through the education which Protagoras laid out, are sufficient to teach men enough about political virtue to live in the city. As we shall see, some are more fit by nature to rule in the cities. Protagoras to this point has made it seem as if anyone in the city was qualified to rule, now it is clear that what he really means is that everyone should be heard for the sake of keeping the city together, but only the few are capable of virtuous rule.

Protagoras clarifies to Socrates what he means when he says all must participate in political virtue. He asks Socrates to compare a man raised by laws to a man raised without law. The civilized man could not possibly be as unjust or as savage as the man left to nature. Seen in this light all civilized men are spoiled when looking for teachers of virtue because all in the cities are teachers of virtue. The bar for judging political virtue has been significantly lowered. Protagoras asks us to admit that anyone who is capable of

living in a city, thereby possesses political virtue. Protagoras then cites a comedy by Pherecrates which contains savages unschooled in law. This reference appears to make a comedy of those like Callicles or Hippias who believe they can live or ought to live according to nature. To do so is pure comedy. Even if they thought they ought to be unjust they would be forced to at least appear to follow the law, in order to be admitted into the cities. The law may well be against nature, but so much the better, according to Protagoras, when one soberly investigates the alternative.

The folly of searching for a teacher of political virtue is compared to the search for a teacher of Greek. The whole community ‘teaches’ Greek sufficiently. It is enough for children to be exposed since birth to be able to speak the language. Therefore it would not be strange if it proved difficult to find an expert in an art which all possesses. As there are grammarians and rhetoricians who can help a student to not only speak but speak well, there are teachers of virtue, such as Protagoras.

2.3.7 Protagoras: Teacher of Gentleman (328a-328c).

Finally, Protagoras turns to how his ability as a teacher relates to his account of virtue. As all in the city are capable of teaching the basics about political virtue, Protagoras is one of the few, who are hard to find, that help those already associated with the basics become better. Since nearly anyone can become a good citizen, Protagoras helps turn a citizen into a gentleman (*kalos k’ agathos*). The implication is that Protagoras can make men masters of the political virtue in the same way that Orpheus was master of the musical arts. Protagoras never explains what he means by this and is content, perhaps to satisfy

his audiences' democratic prejudices, to leave his account to imply that he only refines what the cities spend so much effort training in their citizens.⁹⁴

As a guarantee of his claim, Protagoras says that those students of his who are dissatisfied may forgo paying his fee and swear an oath at a temple and donate the amount they deem his instruction to be worth. This appears to be stated for the sake of those that have understood the implications of Protagoras' teaching. On his argument thus far one might be tempted to bid Protagoras' farewell and head to the temple ready donate very little, if anything, as payment for his time.

Protagoras has demonstrated how the cities raise good citizens (*polites*) while he claims that he can help a man become a gentleman (*kalos k' agathos*). As our brief investigation has shown, Protagoras has only demonstrated how citizens acquire the virtues necessary for being ruled. These virtues are justice, moderation and piety along with the recognition that everyone has an equal say as to how these virtues, and other considerations, apply in politics. Though much has been said about citizenship nothing has been said about the art of rule. Protagoras' account gives the impression that rule is more or less automatic in the cities. This is an unlikely position for Protagoras to hold. Protagoras does not claim to educate citizens, but rather claims to educate gentleman. Is it possible gentlemen are those that rule the many (including children, men and woman)?

To corroborate my interpretation that Protagoras' account of politics need not be read as a defence of Athenian democracy, one need only look to Protagoras' judgments about the

⁹⁴ Adkins gives a good analysis of the ways in which Protagoras' speech is guarded against the democratic and egalitarian elements prejudices of his audience. A. W. H. Adkins. "Arête and Techne: Democracy and Sophists. Protagoras 316b-328d," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 93 (1973): 3-12.

many later in the dialogue. The myth gives the appearance that all share in civic virtue, and even that the democratic form of government is the best because all are justly recognized as having expertise in politics. If it were true that all equally know the political art, in the sense of the art of rule, then the opinions of the many about the good and bad, just and unjust, and noble and base would be worthy of consideration. But Protagoras later asks Socrates “Why Socrates, ought we to investigate the opinion of the many among human beings, when they say whatever happens to occur to them?” (353a).

The suspicion that Protagoras does not reveal the complete account of politics in his ‘Great Speech’ is confirmed by a review of a number of aspects of both his *mythos* and his *logos*.⁹⁵ Recall first that Zeus did not give mankind the political art, but rather gave him shame and right to make the foundation of cities possible.⁹⁶ Recall that part of the political art which Protagoras teaches is the art of war. Surely the conduct of war requires a degree of justice and moderation, but it would also seem to require much more, including good council and courage. These virtues are not needed for the domestic policy of the city, but they are necessary for foreign policy. Protagoras, however, did mention that he teaches both good council (*euboulia*, 318e) and manly virtue (*andros areten*, 325a). His teaching on foreign policy is hidden beneath his account of domestic policy.

Stated differently, his full account of political virtue suggests that politics is at its highest

⁹⁵ Kerford’s “Protagoras’ Doctrine of Justice and Virtue” makes many careful observations about what exactly Protagoras’ argues through his myth. Especially useful is his observation that *aidos* and *dike* are not given by nature (p 43), and his correct observation that Protagoras’ speech does not claim to account for rulers, only citizens (44). I do not agree with Kerford, however, that some of the art of rule is not implicit in Protagoras’ Great Speech. Any account of the virtues necessary to be ruled implies virtues which are necessary for ruling. My interpretation stands as my response. In this regard see also J.S. Morrison, *Place of Protagoras*, pp 6-11, whom Kerford claims to be explicitly challenging in his article. Morrison is much more attuned to the tension which Protagoras must finesse in presenting his teaching to a democratic audience.

⁹⁶ Most commentators assume Protagoras earnestly believes that shame and right are sufficient for the political art. See for example Goldberg’s otherwise useful analysis of Protagoras: Goldberg, *Commentary*, pp 13-66.

in foreign policy and that domestic policy almost takes care of itself. If domestic policy almost takes care of itself then there is no significant difference between the regimes in regards to virtue.

We have already begun to form an image of what Protagoras' art must be like. It would be an art which creates good rulers because it shows leaders that they must promote civic virtue with laws which focus, at a minimum, on moderation, justice and piety. Laws so framed will make the citizens able to be ruled through their sense of right and shame. A good citizen is one who follows the laws of the city. Part of being a good ruler is knowing how to create good citizens and knowing how to defend the city against dangers. Recalling the two arts in the Ship of State image from *Republic*, Protagoras has claimed that he has the art of ruling the sailors on the ship, but it is not yet clear if he knows *where* to lead the ship. In fact, Protagoras' art seems exclusively concerned with keeping the ship afloat, not where to sail it. On the basis of the Prometheus myth we can infer that he believes that rule consists entirely of maintaining order in the city through law and preventing it from being destroyed from outside through diplomacy and war.

To reiterate, Protagoras' teaching about politics is meant to be universal in the sense that it applies to any regime, democratic as well as timocratic, oligarchic or even tyrannical. The limits of his teaching will be investigated through Socrates' response to Protagoras' speech but it is worth considering at this juncture a suggestion of C.C.W Taylor in his commentary on the *Protagoras*. Taylor argues that the presentation in Protagoras' myth amounts to a demonstration of value relativism where each individual must decide his own truth with the consequence for political theory that "the most sensible rule is to let

all human opinions be heard and to act on the one which wins the most general assent.”⁹⁷

Protagoras’ version of relativism, as with all relativism, is not necessarily democratic. Protagoras teaches men to become notable in the city and this implies that he teaches men how to have *their opinion or truth* win in the city. Taylor’s conclusion that ‘the most sensible rule’ is democratic purportedly follows from the premises of value relativism and the necessity that cities make decisions. Strictly speaking, relativism does not distinguish between the ‘sensibleness’ of any regime or opinion. If any opinion is as valid as any other, and there is a necessity that only one opinion be followed by the city, then the source of the opinion is irrelevant. What matters is that there is an opinion. The opinions of the city can be democratic or tyrannical. Taylor’s conclusion is based on the premise that relativism leads to the necessity to compromise but it could just as easily lead to a necessity to tyrannize. After all, one can only become notable in the city if one’s truth wins and is recognized. At bottom Protagoras’ relativism leads to a pursuit of power. That Protagoras is willing to defend convention argues more for his nobility than the consistency of his position. What Taylor misses is the obvious point that sometimes the opinions of the many can be anti-democratic or even tyrannical. Nothing in the doctrine of value relativism can sensibly ground the basic principles of any regime let alone the most sensible.

Thus far we can group the specific virtues together as follows: the virtue of piety comes into being from man’s consciousness of possessing technical wisdom and the power of speech. It is the most primal of Protagoras’ virtues, but also the one most closely associated with hubris. The virtues of justice and moderation come into being through the

⁹⁷ Taylor, *Protagoras*, p 84.

appeal of the law to man's capacity for right and shame. Courage, thus far, seems to be required by the city for war and other actions and it also seems to unify the political virtues in so far as political virtue can be summed up as 'manly virtue'.

As there is a ranking among the virtues so too is there a ranking of the powers of nature, art and convention. The lowest domain is raw nature because in human beings it is the source of vice, including, injustice, immoderation and cowardice. Though nature is the lowest regime it also provides the basic standard for the virtues. Art and convention are necessary because of the depravity of man's nature. In this way the harmony of the natural and animal world is perhaps also Protagoras' model for mankind's conventional world (c.f. 322c-d and 326d).

The next highest domain would appear to be nature cultivated by art. Though it is not responsible for any political virtue on its own, it is responsible for piety, as art allows men to express their divine portion in worship. With this said, piety has a special relationship with man's technical wisdom. Technical wisdom appears to heighten man's capacity for evil, but also allows men to see the need for political virtue.

The next highest domain is convention or law. Convention and its appeals to right and shame are responsible for teaching justice and moderation. Moderation would appear to be lower than justice because it was primarily injustice which caused the cities to crumble prior to the introduction of convention (see 322b).

All three of these virtues taken together are manly virtue (*andros areten*). The higher virtue of rule has parts and includes the lower virtues of piety, moderation and justice. Based on the argument above, this higher virtue would be the art of rule, and as

Protagoras will reveal later, it is based in courage, and as we have already inferred, it requires a good nature with proper rearing in art and convention. More importantly, it requires that the rulers understand the truth about convention in politics. What is important is not justice, but only the appearance of justice. Part of learning the higher virtues is to learn that justice, moderation and piety are necessary fictions for the city to exist. A ruler must be courageous in so far as he might need to disregard these virtues. It is perhaps for this reason that the virtue which Protagoras' teaches is *manly virtue* and amounts to educating gentleman, not mere human beings. As this virtue or art is called manly we can assume it implies the art of war and the art of rule.

The highest virtue is finally the sophistic virtue or the art of legislation. Protagoras does not explicitly speak about legislation. To see that he must think he can teach legislation can be deduced in the following way. Protagoras argues that the laws which govern justice and moderation and all aspects of the city are the forces which educate good citizens. Good citizens are courageous in war but also just, moderate and pious. We have seen from our analysis of Protagoras' account of justice that he only believes the appearance of these virtues is necessary. To become notable in the city and wise in the affairs of the city amounts to knowing that only the appearance of the virtues is necessary and that the true aim is to gain honour or riches for oneself. In Protagoras' *logos* he states that the laws are models for virtue and that the laws themselves were inventions of good lawgivers of olden times (326d). Protagoras states earlier that he differs from the ancients because he proclaims openly to educate human beings. His criticism of the ancients implies that he is wiser than they are in so far as he can see the limitation of their esotericism (316d). Protagoras, in praising the lawmakers of the past, suggests that

perhaps laws need not be passed but merely enforced and administered. Protagoras also implied that he knew the legislator's art when he admitted that he possessed the political art and could make good citizens (319a). Protagoras was also known to have helped craft laws. Putting these observations together suggests that the laws of the city are not as important to the virtue of the city as are their administration. Zeus' law that the law be followed is all that is required to make good citizens.

Protagoras' suggests that the political art lies within Zeus' Citadel and is guarded by ferocious sentries. In this section, it has been argued that Protagoras veils his beliefs about the art of rule behind his account of how citizens are educated in virtue. The sophistic art, that which Protagoras' teaches, appears to be the kingly art. Protagoras the father, mimicking and surpassing Prometheus, must have stormed Mount Olympus, tricked the all-mighty father Zeus, and returned among men with the political art to save mankind from evil.⁹⁸

2.4 Socrates' Socratic Response

Socrates first line of enquiry into Protagoras' account of his art concerns the unity of virtue. Many commentators have wondered at how this line of enquiry relates to Socrates and Protagoras' disagreement about the teachability of virtue. In this section, I will argue

⁹⁸ See Hesiod *Works and Days*, 170- 201. This section of Hesiod's account is the end of the devolution of the races and outlines the final stage of corruption at which point mankind will surely become extinct. The final sentence reads as follows: "And then Aidos and Nemesis, with their sweet forms wrapped in white robes, will go from the wide-pathed earth and forsake mankind to join the company of the deathless gods: and bitter sorrow will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil."

that Socrates' response is aimed to clarify the dual nature of Protagoras' view of virtue: the virtues required to be ruled, versus the virtues required to rule. This line of enquiry gets to the heart of the tenability of the distinctions which Protagoras made between nature, convention and art and how each of the virtues is rooted in these distinctions. Socrates' arguments also have the effect of challenging Protagoras' composite account of human being: if the virtues are unified then human being is unified, which is to say that it is not composed of fundamentally disparate parts and inclinations. If the virtues are unified, or if it is possible that true virtue is a kind of harmony, then Protagoras' view of education in political virtue will be shown to be not only false, but dangerous, because it promotes or doesn't check unhealthy ambitions. It should be noted that on the face of Protagoras' account, human being is unified by the principle of completing a unified nature. Art and convention compliment the inadequacies of nature to make people able to live peacefully in cities. The tension lay in what Protagoras did not say.

Socrates is enchanted by Protagoras' speech, so much so, that he desires to hear more. After a pause, while addressing himself to Hippocrates, he thanks him for compelling him to visit Protagoras because he previously thought that it was not by any human care that the good became good. It is unclear to what extent Socrates is being ironic. How did Socrates think virtue came to be before hearing Protagoras? How did he believe that the good became good? From his conversation with Hippocrates he seemed to imply that an education was possible; one can be taught healthy learnables by a doctor or trainer of the soul and thereby become better if not good. Socrates criticized Hippocrates for not taking sufficient care of his soul in desiring to submit himself to a foreigner whom he has not met and about whom he had not consulted any of his elders.

There is an ambiguity in Socrates' earlier claim that he believed that the good do not become good by human care: by good does Socrates mean healthy or virtuous? Or are health and virtue the same? They do not seem to be for the body. One can have a healthy body, but not be an excellent runner. Doctors aim at restoring bodies to health, while trainers aim to make healthy bodies perform excellently. Health would seem to be a prerequisite for virtue in the case of the body, but is it with the case of the soul? Are there basic conditions of the soul which are required for the excellences of the soul? Just as an Olympic runner must have a certain bone structure and muscle development, must a soul possess certain qualities to be courageous, just, moderate and wise? Is the capacity to feel pleasure, pain or fear enough or does a soul require a certain capacity for *eros*, *thumos* or *logos* to be virtuous?

Returning to the text, Socrates' claims that if we were to converse with the public speakers of Athens we would hear the same speeches or similar speeches to those which Protagoras just gave. Socrates' implicit criticism is that Protagoras teaches what the many already believe; the many are the great sophists' teacher.⁹⁹ Socrates compares the ability of public speakers to respond to questions about their speeches to bronze vessels that ring the same note when struck. More than this they always answer with long speeches when asked short simple questions. Protagoras is different in Socrates' estimation, in that he believes that Protagoras can not only answer briefly, but also ask and wait for an answer. Socrates claims this is an accomplishment of the few. The relationship between the few and many, as already indicated above in the analysis of Protagoras' understanding of how virtue is acquired, will continue to be important in the dialogue. After attempting to

⁹⁹ See *Republic of Plato*, 493a-c.

flatter Protagoras into submitting to the Socratic Method, Socrates proceeds with his attack.

2.4.1 Unity of Virtue I: 328d – 332a: Piety and Justice

Socrates begins by observing the following about Protagoras' speech: the myth sometimes spoke of justice, moderation and piety as if they should be taken together as virtue. Socrates wants Protagoras to clarify what he meant by making that claim. Socrates' attack is not unfounded, as Protagoras did in fact give a different name to the unity of those virtues, *manly virtue*. As we have noted above in examining Protagoras' myth, we can see that he has not given a full account of virtue because he has left out teaching the art of rule, including the art of legislation. By asking about the unity of virtue Socrates will try to gain some clarity about how the virtues which Protagoras did not fully explain in his account, the higher virtues, courage and wisdom, are related to those virtues of which he did give an account, justice, moderation and piety. In short, what remains to be discovered is whether all virtues are compatible or not: can one be wise, courageous, pious, moderate and just. Of special importance is whether justice is compatible with wisdom and courage.¹⁰⁰

Socrates begins by asking Protagoras to choose between two analogies for how virtue is a unity. The first is that virtue is a unity in the way that a piece of gold is a unity. Gold is a

¹⁰⁰ See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, 76-79.

unity because the parts of gold differ only in size and each part of gold has the same qualities as the whole piece of gold. The parts are unified into a whole by bearing all of the qualities of the whole, in other words, the whole and the parts differ only in degree of size not kind. This would imply that the difference between justice and wisdom was one of degree of virtue not kind. This is not as ridiculous as a potential interpretation of Protagoras' myth as it might first seem. The ranking of the virtues implied in his account suggests that some can be more virtuous than others and this analogy would seem to account for that. Those who have piety, moderation and justice are virtuous but less virtuous than the rulers who possess wisdom and courage. What this analogy would not account for would be the different powers which the virtues have; it implies that all the virtues possess the same quality. This would seem to be the Socratic view: if virtue is knowledge then it is all one quality.¹⁰¹ This would also seem to be Protagoras' view, if his analogy to the flute player is to be trusted, as in that analogy he portrayed the difference between the virtues of the rulers and ruled as one of degree. With this said it is strange that Socrates does not offer Protagoras a *musical* analogy for the unity of the virtues.

It would appear as the conversation continues that Socrates wants to compare virtue to gold through his usual maxim that virtue is knowledge. This of course would imply that only the wise are virtuous and that the kind of two-part political virtue which Protagoras espouses is impossible. The problem with the Socratic claim, without further exposition, would be that political virtue is impossible. Socrates' implicit claim that virtue is like gold can be compared to *Republic* book 3 where virtue is compared to gold in the myth of

¹⁰¹ See *Gorgias* 486d.

metals. In the myth of the metals all virtue is like metal, but some metals are more precious and others more useful.¹⁰² Gold and Silver, for example, are more precious than bronze, iron and tin, which are more useful. From this account Socrates could present the view of civic virtue as presented in *Republic*, book 4. Be that as it may, if Protagoras integrated Socrates' suggestion in this way he could plausibly accept that virtue is like gold, if only he was willing to publicly admit that he actually espouses two different accounts of virtue: one for the many (iron and tin?) and one for the few (silver and gold?). Or interpreted less charitably, if Protagoras was willing to admit that only wisdom and courage are virtues and the rest of the virtues are a necessary mirage to keep the city together, then the ruled are without virtue.¹⁰³

The second possibility is that virtue is a unity in the way that the eyes, ears and nose are a unity in the face. It is not immediately clear how a face is a unity. A face is composed of qualitatively different parts: eyes, ears, noses, mouths etc. These parts do not differ by degree but rather each possesses unique powers: eyes that can see, noses that can smell, ears that can hear. This accounts for how justice and moderation are different from courage and wisdom, but it is less clear how the virtues form a unity. Wholes, which are composed of qualitatively different parts, are formed by organizing those parts for a higher purpose. The parts of the body, for example, are organized to sustain the whole body, and form a unity around that principle. The face is composed of parts which have powers and would thus seem to form a unity by virtue of having powers. The principle of

¹⁰² *Republic of Plato*, 414d-415d.

¹⁰³ The attempt to reconcile this tension with reference to the *Republic*, of course, only provides a way to restate the problem. The new form of the question on the grounds of Socrates' account in the *Republic* is: how can the account of virtue in book four be reconciled with the account given in book seven? It is reasonable to suspect that perhaps the *Protagoras* will reveal something of how both accounts of virtue can be justly defended as virtue. If this cannot be done then it would seem that Protagoras' view of politics is consistent with Socrates' view of politics as it relates to the dichotomy of virtue.

unity in the face becomes clearer when one thinks through the powers which are in the face. The face is an assembly of powers with a seeming diversity of ends: speaking, listening, smelling, tasting, chewing and seeing. The other parts of the face, cheeks, lips, forehead, chin *etc*, either serve the senses, such as the case of lips with tasting and speaking, or serve to support and guard parts beneath the face, the forehead protecting the brain for example. When the face is thought of in this way it has at least three different ends: communicating, sensing, and ingesting.

Communicating, sensing and ingesting are unified on Protagorean grounds for the same reason all parts of the body are unified: for the sake of living. However, as the conversation itself demonstrates this is not all that the parts of the face are unified by, they are also unified for the sake of knowledge. Seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting can be seen as gathering knowledge about the external world. These powers in conjunction with the power of speech make communicating possible, but logos is also capable of refining experience of particulars in to knowledge. We shall call this the Socratic principle of unity.

The Protagorean view of the unity of virtue is an extension of the basic will of human beings to survive. This view is consistent with the myth: it is necessary to live in cities and thus for there to be rulers and ruled and so there are necessary virtues which are incumbent to this primary necessity. Human excellence is always measured against the threat of extinction. The Protagorean view of virtue is at bottom the account of virtue derivable from the Darwinian view of nature¹⁰⁴. Nature only prescribes survival and it is

¹⁰⁴ See Bernadette, "Protagoras's Myth and Logos."

up to human beings to adapt accordingly or be destroyed. Survival, or in the words of the dialogue, safety, is the natural standard of virtue.

The Socratic view of the unity of virtue on this analogy implies that the virtues of being ruled (piety, justice and moderation) are but one or two senses of many. Possessing only justice, moderation and piety would be like possessing taste and hearing, but not having the power of speech or sight.¹⁰⁵ Full virtue would then mean being in full possession of one's powers for gaining knowledge of the outside world. The philosopher-king would represent the pinnacle of virtue and the rest would be evaluated relative to him or her. It would seem to make consistent the tension in the *Republic*, and the tension in Protagoras' argument, that both analogies must be true to square experience with the unity of virtue.

It is tempting to say that the Socratic view and the Protagorean view must both be true. But this is not necessarily the case. Protagorean virtues do not require the ability to know anything high or great. Ruling and being ruled are completely separate from claims to knowledge about the virtues. There is no knowledge of justice and moderation by which to judge legislation but only a kind of good council about what is needed to survive. That which is noble and good is what best makes survival possible. Virtue is limited to victory or mastery. Socratic virtues on the other hand ground the virtues in knowledge. Knowledge of justice and moderation would provide grounds for determining whether legislation accomplishes more than mere survival but also the noble and good. The noble and good in this case would also be a kind of victory and mastery but it would be grounded in what is truly noble and good. In short, Protagorean virtues imply that mere

¹⁰⁵ In *Republic*, books 6's ship of state image, the owner of the ship is deaf and short sighted. See *Republic*, 488a-b.

life is a noble and good life, while Socratic virtues imply that a self-conscious life is a noble and good life. The contest is between Socratic virtue and tragic virtue.¹⁰⁶

Protagoras' explicit reason for choosing the analogy to the face is that he believes that people can be partly virtuous. A man can be courageous but unjust, while others can be just but not wise. This holds on the analogy of the senses in so far as a man may be deaf but still be able taste. To this point in the conversation, Socrates has not assumed that courage and wisdom were virtues on Protagoras' view. As we have outlined above, this is not surprising as Protagoras' only explicitly claimed that justice, moderation and piety could be understood as a unity. Socrates confirms with Protagoras that he believes that wisdom and courage are in fact parts of virtue and Protagoras answers that they are *most of all* virtues and that wisdom is the greatest part of virtue.

Socrates then returns to the analogy of the face to elicit agreement that each virtue is a separate virtue because each virtue has a different power.¹⁰⁷ Socrates then gets Protagoras to agree that each of the five virtues is unlike any of the other virtues. The analogy of the face to five virtues suggests that the five virtues must be like the five powers housed in the face: the powers of tasting, smelling, hearing, seeing and speaking. The only one of the senses which does not have an organ especially designed in the face is the sense of touch. Socrates only lists two of the senses, sight and hearing, and lists knowledge and justice as the first two virtues when confirming the analogy with Protagoras. This suggests that on Socrates' account, knowledge and justice are the highest virtues as sight

¹⁰⁶ See Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, aphorisms 1-14. Protagoras' concept of virtue as I have outlined in the myth and the above analysis suggests it is close to Nietzsche's assessment of Aeschylus' judgment in his play about Prometheus: "All that exists is just and unjust and equally justified in both" (Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, aphorism, 9). Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*, translation by Walter Kaufman: *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966).

¹⁰⁷ See *Republic of Plato*, 353d, where the virtues are defined as powers of the soul.

and hearing are the highest senses. Protagoras and Socrates would both agree that knowledge is one of the highest of the virtues, but they would disagree about whether the Apollonian virtue of justice or Dionysian virtue of courage ought to be ranked with knowledge as the highest of virtues.

Socrates invokes a phantom questioner to deliver a challenge to Protagoras' view that virtues are unified in the same way that a face is unified. This phantom third interlocutor, though Socrates questions on his behalf, is meant to show Protagoras that Socrates is willing to take some ownership of the argument in pursuing its implications. This is aimed at getting the good will of Protagoras, but it is also meant to induce Protagoras into submitting to Socrates' guidance in the argument. Socrates would prefer to have Protagoras act more like Polemarchus than Thrasymachus or Callicles with regards to the argument.¹⁰⁸ The questioner gets agreement from both Socrates and Protagoras that the virtues are something. With this agreement the questioner gets them to agree that justice is just and piety is pious. This would appear to be a reasonable admission in that it would be indecent to suggest that justice is somehow not just, but, on further thought, it is strange. Starting from the terms of the analogy of the virtues to the senses, it would be like agreeing that seeing is a sight or that hearing is a sound. Justice is served through just actions but justice itself is not these actions. Socrates baits Protagoras into this view and it is reasonable to assume that Protagoras like Glaucon has not considered how lavish the craftsman of the senses was.¹⁰⁹ Once this agreement is made, Socrates has the questioner

¹⁰⁸ Though initially hostile to Socrates in the *Republic*, Polemarchus was willing to ally with Socrates after being refuted three times in trying to lay down the definition of justice (*Republic of Plato*, 335d). The same can be said of Thrasymachus, though their confrontation was much more violent (*Republic of Plato*, 335d). The extreme case of dialogical breakdown would appear to be Socrates' conversation with Calicles (see *Gorgias*, 499b-c)

¹⁰⁹ *Republic of Plato*, 507c.

reaffirm that Protagoras and Socrates believe that the virtues are different from each other. Socrates corrects the questioner that this was Protagoras' view and asks Protagoras to affirm again whether this was his view. Protagoras concedes that it is. This ends their pursuit of the argument in common.

Socrates then asks how they are to answer the man when he asks if piety is just and justice is pious.¹¹⁰ Socrates claims that he would assent that this is true and asks whether Protagoras would do the same. Protagoras does not answer directly but instead says that it is a much too simple way of looking at the relationship between justice and piety. Though there is a similarity in calling justice pious and piety just there is also a difference: As seeing is different from something tasted so too is justice different from something pious. Or conversely, as tasting is different from a sight so too is piety different from something just. Protagoras is hesitant to agree because it amounts to an admission that justice is piety and piety is justice. The argument would run as follows: if justice implies the just and piety implies the pious then admitting that justice is pious and piety is just would be the same as admitting that justice implies piety and piety implies justice. This admission would obviously contradict his earlier claim that each virtue was different by virtue have having different powers: the image of the unity of the virtues would be gold and not the face.

Protagoras therefore only grants that there is a similarity between the two and not that they are the same. Protagoras then attacks Socrates' method of argumentation. Protagoras argues that deducing from similarities can easily lead to error. The reason is that by this logic of similarity anything could be made to be like anything else. This is of course true

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, 368b.

when agreements about quality are taken to be arguments of identity. Socrates could be made to be a dog through the fact that both Socrates and dogs are alive. Protagoras' complaint amounts to protesting the use of a logical fallacy to generate absurd conclusions. The fact that Socrates' conclusions could follow from Protagoras' agreed premises is not so much irrelevant on Protagoras' view as it is annoying to argue in this way.¹¹¹ It is annoying because it demands a high level of precision.

Socrates' aim was to try and get Protagoras to see that we intuitively see all the virtues as implying each other and therefore justice, moderation and piety ought to be considered as much a part of true virtue as wisdom and courage. If Socrates could extract the agreement that all universal concepts of virtue imply instances of all the virtues he would then have created an argument for pursuing the whole of virtue not only the parts of virtue which can be aimed at gain when separated from the rest of virtue, i.e., if justice and moderation are separated from wisdom and courage.

¹¹¹ Here is a sample of what Protagoras might mean. The discussion hinges on the following possible interpretations of the argument. Let J = Justice, j = just, P = piety, p = pious. If P = p and J = j and if J = p and P = j then it follows that J = P and vice versa. This argument still holds even if we say that J $\Rightarrow$ j and P $\Rightarrow$ p. The only way the argument that J = P would not hold is if we say that If J $\Rightarrow$ j and P $\Rightarrow$ p and if J $\Rightarrow$ p and P $\Rightarrow$ j. This set of relationships would only allow the conclusion that J $\Rightarrow$ j + p and P $\Rightarrow$ j + p. Socrates' approach to getting J = P would then have to get agreement to the premise from Protagoras that virtue can only be composed of virtue and that each of the virtues implies individual instances of all the other virtues. (ex. Wisdom is wise, moderate, just, pious and courageous). Or to be virtuous is to be wholly virtuous. If this kind of agreement could not be achieved then we could only say that Justice is just and pious but is not piety and Piety is just and pious but is not justice. Protagoras of course bars all of these possibilities by explicitly saying that A does not equal b and B does not equal a thereby perhaps implicitly asserting that only J $\Rightarrow$ j and only P $\Rightarrow$ p therefore he cannot agree that J $\Rightarrow$ p or P $\Rightarrow$ j. For an extended discussion of the logical problems involved in this section see Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, 221-266. There he argues, as I have assumed, that the argument must be understood not as implying identity but attributing a property. There still remains a larger problem, which Vlastos claims to have solved, in the statement that Justice (a universal) can be predicated by a property (just). This seems to me to only hold if all universals are the same. That is that whiteness is the same kind of universal as courage. It is absurd to say that whiteness is white, but it is not as obviously absurd to say that justice is pious or beauty beautiful. What seems to be on trial in these problems is Plato's 'so called' theory of the forms. If we follow Socrates and argue that justice is knowledge then it is not absurd to say that knowledge of justice is just, pious, wise, courageous, moderate. Knowledge of one of the virtues may imply instantiations of the rest.

2.4.2 Unity of Virtue II 332a – 334c: Foolishness and Wisdom

Socrates' next line of attack is to compare the virtues of moderation and wisdom. Protagoras has rejected the argument based on similarity so Socrates' next attempt is to argue from absolute difference through the principle of opposites. The sophists' strength lies in making distinctions.¹¹²

Socrates begins his next set of questions by asking Protagoras whether he believed there was such a thing as foolishness and whether that was not the complete opposite of wisdom (*sophia*). Protagoras agrees. Socrates' new strategy is to compare the vices to the virtues rather than the virtues to each other and his choice of virtues is significant. Wisdom about human affairs for Protagoras is knowledge of the relationship between nature, art and convention and it is based in the power of art to complete nature. Protagoras does not say much about the content of the virtue of moderation but he does argue that it is based partly in nature through the human capacity for shame and partly in the conventions which appeal to shame. To say that foolishness, a vice against nature and convention, is the opposite of wisdom, a virtue based in art does not make sense on Protagorean terms. The vices of foolishness and injustice are not then strictly speaking opposites of wisdom, in other words, they do not necessarily imply ignorance. Protagoras does not seem to notice that moderation has the same status as justice in his account, but

¹¹² Some especially important subtleties of this section of the dialogue are covered over by problems with the translation. *Sophrosune* is typically translated as moderation and *aphrosune* is translated as immoderation. As Bartlett identifies in footnote 69 on page 20 of his translation, *sophrosune* could also be rendered as good-sense, clear-mindedness, or level-headedness. Similarly, *aphrosune* could also be rendered as foolishness or fuzzy-headedness. I will render *sophrosune* as moderation and *aphrosune* as foolishness following Bartlett. See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, p 20 n69). Socrates will play on this range of meanings in this section of the text. See also Socrates and Prodicus' exchange at 339e et al.

we will soon be able to see more clearly that artful injustice is not clearly a vice on Protagorean terms.

Returning to the relationship between wisdom and moderation, Socrates gets Protagoras to agree that human beings act moderately when they act correctly and advantageously. This is strange because moderation is a virtue necessary in those who are to be ruled, but it is not informed by art which grounds wisdom. It seems that Protagoras is not capable of arguing consistently for his position. Protagoras must be careful to defend convention as necessary and only reveal in front of the few that following convention is not always correct or advantageous. Protagoras may see the problems with his answers but is constrained because of his choice of having all those in the house gather to hear him and Socrates converse. This constraint is perhaps why Protagoras gets annoyed at Socrates questions (see 332a and 333d). But is Protagoras' response only because of the political constraints of the conversation? Perhaps. But it is also the case that moderation is required for skilful injustice or more charitably self-control is vital for the practice of the political art. If we are to believe that Protagoras' account is at least internally consistent, the virtue of moderation must be composed of two parts: the first part grounded in shame which in turn is based on convention, the second part grounded in the pursuit of pleasure, the noble and the good. It is this second part of moderation which Protagoras has in mind when he answers that foolishness is the opposite of wisdom.

Socrates then asks Protagoras whether acting moderately is due to moderation. Protagoras agrees and this addition to the argument solves some of the difficulties posed by Socrates' former line of questioning, though it does not solve all the problems. It still makes sense to say that justice is pious and that a consideration for justice is pious.

Protagoras would now be able to agree to Socrates' earlier questions because the agreement that justice is just has been exchanged for the agreement that the just is due to justice. Returning to this line of reasoning, moderation is not moderate but being moderate is due to moderation. Socrates confirms that the same holds of the foolish, that the foolish are fools due to foolishness. Socrates employs two examples to confirm the point: strength/weakness on the one hand and swiftness/slowness on the other. In each example Socrates grounds the noun form in the adverbial form. This procedure is different from the earlier examples of justice and moderation because in those cases the noun form was grounded in the infinitive of the verb form. Socrates' examples show that this maxim holds as much for qualities of actions, which are always relative, as it does for actions themselves.

With this hypothesis about the relationship of the virtues themselves to virtuous actions confirmed, Socrates then asks about opposites and whether there is more than one opposite to each thing. Protagoras agrees there is not on the basis of three sets of opposites. Socrates first asks Protagoras whether he believes there is anything noble (*kalon*) and asks whether there is any other opposite than base (*aischron*). Second he asks whether the good (*agathon*) has any other opposite than the bad (*kakos*). In the third example Socrates asks whether a shrill voice has any other opposite than a low voice. This agreement quickly gets Protagoras into difficulty because he agreed earlier that foolishness was the opposite of both wisdom and moderation.¹¹³

¹¹³ There are also many different words in Greek which could serve as the opposite of *sophia*: *anepistemosune*, *amathia*, *agnosia*,

At this point Socrates gives Protagoras a choice: does he wishes to give up the claim that wisdom differs from moderation or the claim that there is only one opposite to each thing? Socrates gets Protagoras to agree with great reluctance that wisdom and moderation are the same thing on the basis that they have the same opposite and there can only be one opposite to each thing. It is strange that they did not challenge this thesis. The opposite of wisdom does appear to be foolishness but it could also be ignorance (*amathia*)¹¹⁴. The word wisdom (*sophia*) is used in two different ways. Similarly the opposite of foolishness could be any number of virtues, justice, courage, as well as moderation or wisdom. But even if it was determined that there were more than one vice which would be the opposite to each virtue, it is unclear whether they would still be able to get away from the conclusion that all the virtues are unified through being virtues.¹¹⁵ But this returns us again to the difference between the problems of describing virtues using other virtues. Being just may well be wise, moderate and pious but justice is not necessarily wisdom, moderation and piety.

Socrates then asks whether it is moderate to commit injustice. Protagoras says he would be ashamed to admit this is true, but agrees that the many believe it to be true. After

¹¹⁴ This word is used for ignorance later in the dialogue.

¹¹⁵ Aristotle's account of the virtues in the *Ethics* appears to be immune to this problem. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated, glossary and introduction by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, May 1, 2002), book 2. Each of the moral virtues have two opposites and the moral virtues are treated separately from the intellectual virtues Aristotle. Thus Socrates could not exploit the ambiguity of the relationship between the intellectual virtues and the moral virtues to show how all virtues are one. This is not to say that the problem raised here could not be raised relative to the *Ethics*: that is what unifies the intellectual and moral virtues as virtues.

wrangling over this controversial thesis Socrates eventually gets Protagoras to answer as the representative of the many.¹¹⁶

Socrates, beginning again, asks whether committing injustice is moderate. Protagoras agrees that it is so. Socrates then get Protagoras to agree that when one is moderate one thinks-well (*eu phronein*) and deliberates well (*eu bouleuesthai*) and it is through these that one can do well by injustice. Socrates asks whether some things are good and if they are good because they benefit human beings. Protagoras agrees that this is the case, but that those are not the only things which are good. Socrates then asks whether he means that some things are good which do not benefit even one human being or whether he means that which is not beneficial to all human beings. The thrust of this question is aimed at discovering whether Protagoras believes that the virtues are good and the vices bad.

At this point Socrates remarks that Protagoras appears “riled up for a fight” as he launches into a speech about the manifoldness (*poikilon*) of the good (333e). Protagoras argues that the good is so varied that some things which are good for one kind of being are bad for another kind of being. The implicit assumption of this speech is that life provides the standard for the good. Protagoras characterises the relativity of the good both inter-species and intra-species. Protagoras’ guiding metaphor in making his point is that of the doctor applying remedies. Comparing human beings, horses, cattle, dogs and trees, he shows that different remedies are good for some species but not good for others. Manure for example, something obviously bad for animals as food, can be good for

¹¹⁶ This thesis is prominent in the Platonic corpus and its two other major presentations are in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*.

fertilising plants of certain ages. Olive oil, on the other hand, is good for the hair of human beings, but bad when applied to plants. Even if one takes the human-being by himself, “the good is something so complicated and varied that the same thing that is good for outside the human body is worst of all for things within (334b-c). Not to mention what is good for him when he is sick or healthy.”¹¹⁷

The crowd of listeners applauds Protagoras’ speech. Protagoras’ presentation of the good would seem to provide grounds where he could defend that for some it is good to do injustice while it is not good for others. The pious character of the good grounds Protagoras’ political art. Justice, moderation and piety are good for the many but not necessarily good for the few, though it is always good to appear to have these virtues. Socrates does not continue this line of questioning with Protagoras, but we can infer from these first few questions that Socrates might proceed in much the same way as he did

¹¹⁷ See Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p 117 n47. The similarity between these examples and the investigation of the *Theaetetus* are striking and suggest that the two dialogues are a consistent presentation of Protagoras’ teaching. While the investigation of the *Theaetetus* is focused primarily, but not exclusively on Protagoras’ metaphysics, the *Protagoras* is focused primarily, but not exclusively, on his politics.

Socrates and Protagoras appear to disagree about the most fundamental of ideas, the good. The Socrates of the *Republic* argues that the good beyond being grounds all knowledge, Protagoras agrees, but for different reasons: the good grounds relativism. Socrates does not question Protagoras about his view of the good. This discussion is left for the *Theaetetus* where the atmosphere of the conversation is less politically charged. The difference between the more technical discussion in the *Theaetetus* and the more heavily political and sometimes cryptic discussion in the *Protagoras* is an effect of the setting. Given the strange content of this dialogue from this point on, (the interpretation of Simonides’ poem and the hedonistic calculus, for example), it is safe to suspect that these sections are to be understood for their political prudence rather than their metaphysical clarity.

Many of the older commentators (for example Vlastos, *Socratic Studies* and *Platonic Studies*, Shorey, *What Plato Said*, A.E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work* and C.C.W. Taylor, *Plato*) have made valiant attempts to bring some kind of logical consistency to the sections which follow. I believe there have been enough clues in the dialogue thus far to suspect that the discussion is more important for what it shows about the difference between philosophers and sophists than it is as a ‘doctrine’ or theory. Though Nussbaum’s *Fragility of Goodness* is useful in other ways, her study fails, in my view, to see the spirit in which the dialogue is meant to be read. Though she seems to take the dramatic context into consideration in her account she doesn’t consider that the dialogue is meant to diagnose the political problems which the dramatic context implies as much as it is meant to offer hope. Specifically I cannot agree with her that Socrates seriously endorses the hedonistic calculus as a hope for politics (see p 111). I let my argument stand that the *Protagoras* is meant to demonstrate the limits of sophistry while offering the hope that Socratic psychology may be able check political decay as a response.

with Thrasymachus in the *Republic*.¹¹⁸ There Socrates tried to demonstrate the inconsistency of calling a vice a virtue while implicitly recognizing that virtues are based in knowledge.

At this point in the argument Protagoras and Socrates descend into a disagreement about how to proceed in the conversation. Before examining this disagreement and the following compromise, it is useful to sum up to this point how Socrates has attempted to challenge Protagoras' argument. First, Protagoras claims to teach human beings virtue and thus make them better. More specifically, he claims to teach others good council (*euboulia*) about the affairs of the city and their domestic affairs. This good council is the political art which makes good citizens. Protagoras makes good citizens by teaching them how the virtues are grounded in the various parts of human being and which virtues need to be cultivated to gain the art of rule. Protagoras says little about what the higher virtues of courage and wisdom are like but he does say that all virtues are necessary to form a city and when taken together are called manly virtue. The virtues of wisdom and courage seemed to be separate from these as they are dependent on instruction and a good nature. Socrates then challenged this presentation of the virtues by taking two routes to investigate how the virtues are unified. This approach has the effect of collapsing all the distinctions between nature, art and convention which Protagoras made about the sources of the virtues. During the conversation he ends up speaking of all five of the virtues, piety, moderation, justice, courage and wisdom as if they had the same ground. First Socrates attempts to equate piety and justice, then moderation and wisdom and finally he attempts to equate justice and moderation. If Socrates had succeeded in his argument all

¹¹⁸ *The Republic of Plato*, 348d- 354c.

the virtues would have been grounded in wisdom or knowledge: if justice is equal to moderation and moderation is equal to wisdom then it would quickly come to light that all the virtues are wisdom.

Socrates started this line of questioning to discover the unity of virtue because his prior understanding of it had lead him to believe that human beings do not become good by human care. If it does come to light that all the virtues are based in wisdom then it would be upon Socrates to demonstrate that wisdom, and thus virtue, is not teachable though it is learnable. To make Socrates' argument consistent he would have to assume that it takes a good nature to learn virtue and thus it is not wholly by any human care that the good become good.

2.5 Crisis 334c – 338e

After Protagoras is 'riled up for battle' and he delivers his polemic concerning the pied nature of the good, Socrates re-grounds the terms of the conversation and an extended quarrel about how the conversation ought to be conducted ensues. Protagoras believes it is not good for him to have his views dissected in front of potential pupils who might not be prepared for his esoteric teaching.¹¹⁹ Or for that matter he may sense that his teaching might not stand up to Socrates' questions, and that he was about to lose the argument. The crisis ensues because Protagoras' love of victory was guided by his love of honour and not his love of wisdom. He would rather save face than face the truth.

¹¹⁹ See *Theaetetus* 152c-e. Socrates implies that Protagoras' teaches different doctrines to the many than he does few. He also offers the meaning of the secret doctrine which that nothing *is* but only *becomes*. This doctrine according to Socrates was taught by former greats such as Heraclitus, Empedocles, Epicharmus and Homer teach. Socrates' cites Parmenides as the sole exception. See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, p16 n53.

Protagoras' does not, of course, address what truly bothers him about the conversation, that Socrates' questions probe too closely to the impolitic or incoherent implications of his teaching. Rather, Protagoras protests against Socrates' desire to dictate the rules of the contest. He states flatly that if he always let his opponent determine the terms of the discussion then the name Protagoras would have never gained a reputation among the Greeks. Upon hearing this declaration, Socrates attempts to leave. Once Protagoras flatly admitted his aim was to 'win' the conversation and secure his reputation, Socrates' obligation to question Protagoras' ended. Protagoras must be compared to the merchant who knows nothing of his wares rather than doctor or trainer of the soul. In short, Socrates has shown that Protagoras is no Tiresias. Socrates is not content to be pitted against Protagoras in a contest based on rules equally agreed to, as if the two disputants were gentlemen who have agreed to duel over a matter of honour. He was willing to pursue the question in common with Protagoras as people who claimed they knew something about it. The terms of the discussion are that Protagoras will teach Socrates about the political art and the unity of virtue. With this said it must appear to the audience that Socrates has lost the contest with Protagoras at this point. Instead of addressing Protagoras' speech on the manifold nature of the good, Socrates quibbles over method and threatens to leave.¹²⁰

This is not to say that Socrates doesn't attempt to further sting Protagoras' pride in his craft by claiming that he is the one known for being wise and capable of following both the long and the short speeches, while Socrates does not claim to be wise and admits he can only follow the short speeches. Since it is Protagoras who is known for wisdom in

¹²⁰ Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, pp 86-87.

both kinds of speech, Socrates can argue that there is no reason why Protagoras cannot stick exclusively with the shorter. Socrates wishes to make it clear to Protagoras that by disengaging from the conversation he is also admitting his limitation as teacher and sophist. But more importantly, from Protagoras' point of view, he will have admitted that the reputation which he has earned among the Greeks was not justly earned. Before Socrates could secure his escape "Callias held [Socrates'] hand in his right hand and got hold [Socrates'] simple cloak" (335c-d).¹²¹

Callias, as host of the gathering, arrests Socrates with the intent of forcing him to stay. While Socrates freely entered the conversation, he is not free to leave. Socrates says he would be willing to stay to gratify Callias' love of wisdom, if he were able. Before identifying exactly how he is unable to continue, Socrates launches an even more scathing critique of the way the sophist has been conducting himself in the conversation. Socrates charges that Protagoras has been discussing the same way that the public speakers do: seeking the applause of the harangue. Socrates ironically complains that he cannot keep up with Protagoras' speech comparing himself to a novice runner trying to keep up with Crison the Olympian runner. Socrates' inability does not necessary stem from a lack of capacity, but only in that he is a novice at this kind of speaking. Socrates then tasks Callias and the others to restrain Protagoras to only use small speeches, if they wish to watch them converse. Socrates demands amount to a plea that the conversation cease to be a conducted like a contest which aims at earning an audience's approval. This kind of speech is suitable for larger public gatherings, but not for a serious discussion. In a competition, two enemies are pitted against one another. Socrates wishes the

¹²¹ This arrest is strikingly similar to Socrates' arrest at the beginning of the Republic by Polemarchus' slave. See *Republic of Plato*, 327b-c.

conversation to become friendly. Thus, if Protagoras is incapable of staying in the conversation, it not only threatens his reputation but shows that he is incapable of friendship. In this light it is useful to recall that friendships, on Protagoras' earlier account, were merely conventional and necessary for the city; by nature, all men are enemies. The virtues associated with friendship, moderation and justice, have no place in contests, what is required are the virtues of courage and prudence. And prudence dictates that retreat is sometimes necessary.

Callias, the ever gracious host, comes to relieve Protagoras from Socrates' assault. He argues that "Protagoras seems to speak justly in claiming that it is his right to speak however he wants, and you in turn whatever way you want" (336b). Callias' agrees with Protagoras' assumption that Socrates and Protagoras are enemies in a contest and thus have an equal claim to determine the rules of the contest. That Callias does not know the difference between public speaking and private discussion suggests that Socrates' attribution of a love of wisdom to Callias is ironic. What Socrates calls Callias' love of wisdom is more accurately called a love of contests or a spiritual form for loving gymnastics.

Alcibiades interrupts and argues that Callias is not speaking nobly because "Socrates agrees he has no share in Protagoras' lengthy speech making and yields to him that" (336b). Alcibiades is taking his cue from Socrates' analogy of Protagoras to Crison the Olympian runner. As will become clear by the end of the dialogue, it is not that Socrates cannot speak at length; it is that Socrates will not compete at speaking for public applause or honour. Alcibiades ignores the difference between victory dedicated to truth and victory dedicated to honour. The force of the analogy does not lay with the method of

speech, but rather in the idea of their discussion being a contest for honour. Though Alcibiades admits the irony of Socrates' 'claim' he has misunderstood Socrates' intention, Alcibiades can only see Socrates as a lover of victory, not a lover of truth in regards to the truth. Alcibiades shows further that he misunderstands Socrates when he claims that the conversation could come to an end amicably if Protagoras conceded that he is less able than Socrates at engaging in short speeches. With that said, Alcibiades does agree with Socrates' choice of short speeches as proper for the conversation as the long speeches have the effect of diverting the audience from the original point. Alcibiades seems to desire to honour the victor only if the victory is justly won. Though Alcibiades confuses victory and honour he does discriminate between honour *per se*, and honour justly won. Alcibiades' contribution sharpens Socrates' appeal to Protagoras' love of honour in regards to wisdom.

Socrates does not have a chance to respond to Alcibiades as Critias interrupts, speaking to both Prodicus and Hippias. He remarks that "Prodicus, Hippias and Callias [are] in my opinion very much on Protagoras' side, and Alcibiades always loves to win in whatever he's after. But we shouldn't side with Socrates or Protagoras" (336d-e). The group as a whole has divided themselves into opposing camps and Critias appeals to the sophists to refrain from taking either side, but instead to work in common and ask Socrates and Protagoras not to end the conversation half-way through. Critias, it seems, has seen the essential point between the sophist and the philosopher and attempts to enlist the remaining two Sophists to assist in overcoming that difference. As Callias and Alcibiades' contributions show, the difference between them is whether their love of

wisdom is pure, or is driven by a love of honour. The seemingly pedantic focus on method highlights this very difference.

Prodicus answers first and remarks that “what you say is noble Critias” and then proceeds to present an argument grounded in his art of making subtle distinctions (337a). His speech is based on a series of seven distinctions: in-common (*koinous*)/equal, wiser/less-learned (*amathesterôi*), dispute/quarrel, friends/enemies, praise/esteem, pleased/delighted and body/soul. Prodicus’ speech concedes that wisdom is relevant in regards to justice, that honour ought to be earned to be meaningful, and that the pleasures of the soul are higher than the pleasures of the body.¹²² Prodicus’ argument can be summed up as an invocation to place the spirit of friendship above their love of their victory for sake of wisdom and honour, as well as the highest pleasures. For Prodicus, the pursuit of wisdom, honour and pleasure are compatible and proper to gentleman.¹²³ Prodicus’ speech wins the praise of “very many of those present” (337c).

Hippias speaks next and he both follows and deepens parts of Prodicus’ speech. Hippias argues that those present are citizens and kin, not by law but by nature. Law, on Hippias’ account, is a “tyrant over human beings, compels many things through force, contrary to nature” (337d).. While Protagoras praised convention as a preserver and saver of human kind, and thereby aims to complete human nature, Hippias argues that convention often works against and corrupts nature. Though convention may be a tyrant in Protagoras’ final judgment, nature certainly is not much better. Art rather than nature is the standard for Protagoras. Because Protagoras’ rejects nature as a standard it is not possible for

¹²² This final distinction is significantly absent from Socrates’ and Protagoras’ hedonistic calculus.

¹²³ It is worth noting that unlike the other sophists, Prodicus never employs the distinction between nature and convention.

Protagoras to account for citizens or friends by nature. Humanity is united by its opposition to nature. Communities are premonitions of art and grounded in convention: Man is by nature individual. Though Hippias' agrees with the spirit of what Prodicus' argues, Hippias' arguments are more philosophical because they are grounded in the distinction between convention and nature. Prodicus' seems blind to this distinction.

After grounding his request in the nature/convention distinction Hippias then attempts to shame his audience by confusing the distinction. First, Hippias praises those present as being those who are most knowledgeable of nature. Second, he argues that they are in the greatest household in Athens, which is in turn "the very hall of wisdom in Greece" (337d). Though Law is the tyrant over nature, the laws of some cities can be less hostile to nature. This is the closest that any of the Sophists or philosophers comes in the dialogue to indicating that there is a qualitative difference between regimes in regards to virtue. Hippias, unlike Protagoras, substantially differentiates between the regimes, and he favours Athens.

Hippias continues to argue, perhaps showing his democratic prejudice, that both Socrates and Protagoras should submit to the arbitration of the group. Socrates is ordered not to insist on the precise form of speech, while Protagoras is ordered to restrain his speeches. Hippias then implores them to set an umpire over discussion. It is not unlikely that he has himself in mind.¹²⁴

This speech, unlike Prodicus,' is praised by *all* those present and Callias reaffirms his hold on Socrates and begs that he select an over-seer. Socrates responds that it is

¹²⁴ See Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, p 94.

improper to set an umpire. Either the most qualified candidate to be umpire is presently in the discussion or they are equal in wisdom to those present. If they are in the discussion then there is no one qualified to take the job and if they are equal in wisdom the umpire becomes superfluous. Socrates dismisses the possibility that anyone there could be wiser than Protagoras so the suggestion of an umpire as a solution to their disagreement is pointless. Socrates will only stay to gratify his love of wisdom, or his love of Callias' love of wisdom: he will not stay to satisfy Protagoras' love of honour. Socrates, in rejecting Hippias' plea for an umpire agrees with Prodicus' judgment that they listen more to the wise than the ignorant. Socrates concedes Protagoras' superior wisdom and only asks that the format of the conversation fit his, admittedly inferior, ability in conducting discussions. With this said Socrates then suggests a compromise: "if Protagoras doesn't want to answer, let him ask" and afterwards Socrates could then return to his questions (338d).

Socrates states that Protagoras seemed very unwilling to follow this procedure but eventually agreed and began to question Socrates about a poem of Simonides.

Before following this next discussion it should be noted that this disagreement about how the conversation ought to be conducted is at the center of the *Protagoras*. If the *Protagoras* is about the beauty of those who claim to be wise, the crucial point is how they conduct their speeches. As I have already indicated, the quibble over method differentiates the lovers of wisdom and the sophists. The sophists aim to win contests of speech to gain honour while the philosopher aims to learn the truth. The coming discussion on Simonides' poem is a demonstration of the difference between how Socrates and Protagoras' conduct their discussions.

At this point it is useful again to look back over the first half of the dialogue and collect so far what we have determined about the larger purpose of the dialogue.

At the most broad level the dialogue is about Protagoras, a man who has gained a reputation for being wise. The dialogue has three prefaces to Socrates encounter with this wise man. The first invokes the concerns of the *Symposium*, while the second invokes the concerns of the *Republic*. The *Symposium* at its height is a description of an ascent guided by the beautiful. The *Republic* at its height is a description of an ascent guided by the good. Both ascents are toward philosophy, but first move through what could be characterised as sophistry. In the *Symposium*, through the love of honour and the love of the products of the mind, and, in the *Republic*, through those artificers who put on shadow plays for their audiences. In the third preface we are led down to Callias' House and wonder whether and by what means we will be lead up again.

We are led down by Socrates into Callias' house which was compared to the Kingdom of the Dead. It become clear in thinking through the analogy that Socrates went to Callias' house within the purview of his mission given by Oracle at Delphi as it is laid out in the *Apology*.¹²⁵ Callias' house contains some of the best up and coming youth, some of whom become notorious. All seem to be present to try and learn how to become notable in the city and to gain a reputation or at least honour for possessing wisdom about the things that concern the city. It is a mercenary atmosphere with many who are reputed to be wise seeking to gain new clientele and many aspiring clientele flattering their would be teachers for favour. We know that Protagoras has been in town for two days prior to this meeting and we are left to wonder what business might have brought him to Athens.

¹²⁵ West and West, *Plato's Apology of Socrates*, 20e – 35d.

We can suspect it may involve the coming war with the Spartans, perhaps Protagoras is here to offer council on the gravest of political matters.

The gathering does not address contemporary politics but rather the highest of topics including the nature of the virtues, the education of the young, the necessities of politics and the means by which to navigate the dangers of politics. In short, the highest of topics because one's answers to the questions of these topics determine how one will choose to lead one's life. The arguments turn on a vital question for sophists, philosophers and ambitious youth alike: can virtue be taught? The question is not raised directly, but instead it is investigated through a discussion about the unity of virtue. This discussion soon raises points of massive political importance such as whether it is moderate or wise to be just. Because of these high stakes the conversation begins to breakdown. The conversation breaks down because there is a lack of unity of purpose among the discussants. Some wish to investigate the truth of these great matters while others seek to gain reputation and favour. In short, the conversation breaks down because it is not a friendly conversation. The clues in the *Protagoras* suggest that the setting of the *Symposium* represents the best conditions for gatherings dedicated to speech. Unlike the *Symposium* which is a friendly conversation throughout in the *Protagoras* the conversation pretends to be friendly until the stakes are raised to the point where its true purpose is revealed. A conversant must be compelled to stay. It remains to be seen whether Socrates can win the good will of his interlocutors as he did with Thrasymachus in the *Republic*.

It also remains to be seen whether Hippias is correct that those in the room are citizens and kin by nature. Among the guests at Callias' house are sophists and future political

leaders who become known as tyrants. It is not a stretch to suggest that the sophists and tyrants might be citizens by nature, but it is unclear whether the philosopher, Socrates, is of their kin. The fact that the sophists and tyrants think of Socrates as kin seems to be all the many needed¹²⁶ to suspect that Socrates corrupted the youth and encouraged tyranny. Other dialogues suggest there is justice to the thought that tyranny and philosophy are related.¹²⁷ The remainder of the dialogue will investigate these same problems, but from a different perspective. In the second half Socrates tries to teach the unity of virtue through self-knowledge and self-mastery.

2.6 Simonides and Pittacus: Socrates' Sophistic Response

This is the most puzzling exchange of the dialogue. It is difficult to see how their differing approaches to the Simonides poem demonstrate any points of significance about what we have identified as the major questions of the dialogue. The quote appears to be about education and about whether it is hard to be or become good but none or little of this content is addressed. In this section I will argue the literary digression is centrally concerned with whether being educated and becoming notable in the city are compatible; put another way, whether love of wisdom and love of honour are compatible.

That their discussion about honour and wisdom occurs in the context of a discussion of a poem of Simonides is no accident. By all accounts he was regarded as a great poet but

¹²⁶ Most commentators do not address this part of the dialogue as a serious part of the more general argument (See A.E. Taylor *Plato The Man and his Work* and Nussbaum's neglect of the poem in *Fragility of Goodness* for example). The three major exceptions to this general rule are Coby's *Sophistic Enlightenment*, Goldberg's *Commentary*, and Bartlett's interpretive essay to his translation of the dialogue.

¹²⁷ See Newell, *Ruling Passion*, especially chapters 3 and 4.

also as a great lover of money and adviser to tyrants. Xenophon's dialogue *Hiero* is a demonstration of how he tried to teach a young tyrant; the result of the dialogue is perhaps better rule, but it also shows Hiero how to be a more effective tyrant.¹²⁸ Protagoras is presented as a potential teacher of those who would later become tyrants, Critias and Charmides. Socrates too is presented in the dialogues as having an association with these same men. The choice of Simonides to discuss virtue, especially the political art, highlights what is at stake from a political point of view in teaching about politics.¹²⁹ The question about the relationship between the sophist, the philosopher and the tyrant would appear to be the best presentation of the question about the relationship between the political art, wisdom and virtue as whole.

Everything we know about the poem discussed in the *Protagoras* comes from the *Protagoras*. The poem is believed to have been composed of four stanzas containing seven lines each and all but the last four lines of the first part and the first line of the fourth part are recited in the text.¹³⁰ This makes it impossible to determine with certainty which of the two interpretations are correct, or whether both are incorrect. We get some evidence that more might be said of the poem when Hippias offers to display his account of the poem. With that in mind, I turn to poem to demonstrate how their discussion is directly relevant to the compatibility of the lover of wisdom and the lover of honour.

¹²⁸ Strauss, Leo. *On Tyranny: including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, edited by Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹²⁹ It is surely no accident that the *Republic* almost begins with Socrates refuting a saying of Simonides defended by Polemarchus. The famous saying disputed there is that justice consists of "paying what is owed." See *Republic of Plato*, 332a.

¹³⁰ See J. Adam and A.M. Adam, *Platonis Protagoras*, trans. with introduction, notes and appendices by J. Adam and A.M. Adam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), appendix 1.

2.6.1 Protagoras' Punch on Socrates 338e – 339e

Protagoras begins his questioning of Socrates by stating that the greatest part of education is being skilled at interpreting and discussing verses. Protagoras intends to test Socrates through a discussion of a poem of Simonides and claims that the poem concerns their topic of discussion, virtue, but transferred to the context of poetry. Simonides, on Protagoras' account, practiced the old kind of sophistry which disguises its teaching in an expertise of another craft (316d). Though Protagoras claims not to practice their art of disguise, he has demonstrated his proficiency in it through his, 'Great Speech' but also through his choice to discuss virtue through poetry. This would seem to diminish the distinction which Protagoras wished to make between himself and his ancient predecessors. Protagoras claims openly to be a teacher, but this does not mean he makes his teaching plain.

Protagoras alerts Socrates to the poem by quoting the opening line of Simonides' ode written for Scopos, a ruler of Thessaly. It begins: 'it is hard to become a good man'. After securing Socrates' agreement that the poem is well fashioned and that something cannot be well (*kalos*) fashioned if it is contradictory, Protagoras cites a line later in the poem which criticizes Pittacus for saying it is hard to be noble. Protagoras argues these lines are not consistent because the poet seems to both praise and blame the aphorism that it is hard to be good. There were 'many' among the audience who voiced their 'tumultuous praise' for Protagoras' account. The clamour of the crowd as well as

Protagoras' blunt point struck Socrates, causing his eyes to go dim and him to become dizzy. Protagoras has found a way to fight using short speeches.

We must pause and ask why Socrates claims Protagoras left him dizzy. To understand this it is necessary to discern what exactly Protagoras was trying to accomplish in making what seems like an obvious, if utterly irrelevant, point. The surface suggests that Protagoras' principle aim was to try and show that Socrates was ignorant of the poem, and thus a fool about the most important part of education. Bartlett suggests a deeper meaning, arguing that Protagoras was attempting to gently reproach Socrates for arguing against a position he knows to be true. On this reading, Protagoras is likening Socrates to Simonides and Protagoras to Pittacus. If this is admitted Protagoras' argument via poetry becomes a clear continuation of their discussion, not of the question of virtue, but rather their discussion about how to conduct a conversation. Protagoras is accusing Socrates of not fighting fairly. Protagoras' opening blow is a request that Socrates make an apology for his conduct in the discussion. Though Protagoras agreed to proceed on Socrates' terms he is clearly not convinced by Socrates' arguments to limit the discussion to *brachyology*. Socrates sees Protagoras' reservation and once he recovers from the blow demonstrates in grand Socratic style, what Alcibiades suspects, that he *can* speak at length, but he does not want to because that manner of speaking is not the way that wise men ought to converse.

The problem with this reading, as an exhaustive account, is that it cannot account for why Protagoras believes that the discussion is an extension of the discussion about virtue. The formal disagreement about virtue to this point is whether all the virtues must be considered virtue together or whether one can be partly virtuous. The way into what

Protagoras might be trying to teach about virtue is through a determination of whether there is any justice to Protagoras' criticism that Socrates is purposely refuting a position he himself believes to be true. Does Socrates truly believe that it is impossible for someone to be "courageous but unjust, whereas others can be just but not wise" (329e)? The ground for Protagoras' disagreement is that he is incredulous that Socrates could be arguing in earnest that the virtues are unified as gold is unified. As Bartlett points out, the fact that Socrates is stunned by Protagoras' argument and its reception by the audience argues that there appears to be some justice to Protagoras' criticism.

So was Protagoras being disingenuous when he stated that the poem concerns virtue? The opening line of the poem reads: 'it is hard to truly become a good man'. Manly virtue was Protagoras' original formulation to describe how virtue is unified. As the later discussion makes clear, Protagoras agrees with Simonides' judgment that it is truly hard to become a good man; he only takes exception with Simonides' disingenuous reproach of Pittacus. On the level of the discussion about virtue, Protagoras is arguing that manly virtue is hard so it cannot be like justice, piety and moderation because everyone can and must participate in those virtues, or at least appear to, for the sake of the survival of the city. More precisely, what is hard about manly virtue is appearing to possess the virtues of the many while truly pursuing one's own ambitions. If Protagoras can move the discussion from the unity of the virtues to the education of the virtues he can more clearly demonstrate, without publicly praising injustice, how some virtues like justice and wisdom, are contradictory. For Socrates the question of the unity of virtues is prior to the question of their teachability, while for Protagoras it is exactly the inverse: the unity of the virtues lies in which realm they are grounded, nature, convention or art.

Protagoras' interpretation of why the poem contradicts itself is based on two very suspect equivocations. Protagoras takes as identical the good (*agathos*) and the noble (*esthlos*) as well as becoming (*genesthai*) and being (*emmenai*). Socrates will later question Protagoras' identification of becoming and being, but he does not question his identification of the good with the noble. The reason for this will become clearer later in the dialogue. Leaving his identification of the good and the noble aside, what is at stake in identifying becoming with being? If there is no difference between becoming good and being good, then striving for the good would amount to being good and vice versa, being good would be amount to becoming good. Protagoras seems to prefer Simonides' formulation of the poem: "a good man (*agathos andron*) it is hard to become (*genesthai*).” It is after-all manly virtue which Protagoras claims to teach as full virtue, that is, as all the virtues taken together (325a).

Protagoras' intention in bringing up the poem is two fold. The first part of the intention has already been discussed, that it is Protagoras' means to gently reproach Socrates for how he has conducted the discussion up to this point. The point which is more closely related to the content of their disagreement is to return the conversation to a discussion of the *original* question about the acquisition of virtue and not the unity of virtue. Protagoras' intention is to present the worth of his view of education and he does this by criticizing Simonides' poem. Protagoras means to debunk Simonides as an authority by showing that the poem is self-contradictory. By criticizing the content of the poem, Protagoras can carefully show his view of the relationship between manly virtue on the one hand and conventional or political virtue on the other.

Coby, and most other commentators, argue that by showing his demonstration of the poem as self-contradictory, Protagoras “apparently has accomplished all that he intends”¹³¹. This is argued to be the case because there was ‘tumultuous’ applause when Protagoras made his point. But it is difficult to believe that Protagoras could have been as ignorant about the poem as to not even see that being and becoming are not the same thing. This is why I agree with Barlett’s suggestion that the opening move by Protagoras is a reproach to Socrates’ way of arguing.¹³² It is perfectly plausible that after Protagoras’ opening punch he would move to questions about virtue which are inherent in the poem. That Protagoras and Socrates differ about the substance of the poem will soon become clear. It is fair, given what Protagoras has seen from Socrates thus far in the argument, that he expects Socrates to return to the subject of virtue.

2.6.2 Socrates’ Response 339e – 347a

Socrates’ counter attack against Protagoras’ punch amounts to Socrates’ version of the “Great Speech” and it serves as an indictment against the views of all the sophists present, Hippias and Prodicus’ as well as Protagoras. Protagoras’ punch amounts to an assault on the philosopher as it accuses the philosopher of being a sophist. Socrates’ exposition will thus attempt to clear up the difference between sophists and philosophers, while Socrates presents his own view about good citizens and gentleman.

To regain his composure, and bide time to figure out what the poet must have meant, Socrates turns to Prodicus for help. Socrates, in asking for Prodicus’ help, makes his appeal based on Prodicus’ status as a citizen of Ceos. In so doing, yet another Homeric

¹³¹ Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, p 100.

¹³² Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, pp 76-77.

image is employed. Socrates compares himself to the embattled river god Scamander calling upon a fellow river god Simoeis for defence against Achilles' slaughter of the Trojans. The river Scamander was charged by Zeus to defend Troy and he attempts to execute that charge in the face of Achilles' bloody rage over Patroclus' death. The joint forces of Scamander and Simoeis do not check the power of Achilles, for soon after they join forces, the warring gods themselves descend into the battle to settle it: Achilles and Athena are victorious. It remains to be seen whether Protagoras will be similarly victorious in the battle, though Achilles' fate in the tale ought not to be forgotten.

Socrates invocation of Achilles also reminds us of Book 2 of the *Republic* and the *Apology*. In the latter, Socrates criticizes Achilles as a representation of a virtuous guardian and in the former Socrates compares himself to the ill fated demi-god. When these contrasts are brought to mind we are led to ask whether Protagoras, though self-consciously modern, might espouse only a more refined and slightly less radical version of the virtue of Achilles as told by the older sophist Homer. Read in this light, Book 2 of the *Republic* would not only be a reformation of the poetry of old, but also a reformation of the sophists. In terms of the *Protagoras* it means that Socrates compares the most famous of the sophists to the most famous of Greek Heroes, to defeat Protagoras in contest is to defeat the best of the Greeks of the past. The whole mythic structure which Socrates adds to his telling of the tale of his encounter with Protagoras suggests that Socrates sees himself as a Greek hero battling other heroes. Since the aim of these battles in poetry is linked to honour, we must consider that Socrates too is working to win honour. The question would be whether he is fighting for *his* honour or the honour of philosophy.

2.6.3 Socrates failed Alliance with Prodicus

The reason for enlisting Prodicus is double: first Socrates implies that through Prodicus' shared citizenship with Simonides, Protagoras' attack on Simonides is also an attack on Prodicus. Prodicus, has or will have, experience at serving his city's interests, he is said to have actually represented his city in front of the Athenian assembly.¹³³ Socrates' use of Prodicus' and Simonides' shared conventional citizenship as grounds for an obligation for Prodicus to defend Simonides is a gentle check to Hippias' speech earlier where he argued that obligations only come from those who are kin by nature. This theme will be further addressed in Socrates' speech.¹³⁴ The second reason that Socrates enlists Prodicus' aid is for the use of his famous musical skill of making distinctions between synonyms. The first reason appeals to Prodicus' particularity as a citizen of Ceos and the second to his musical skill as it applies to his native dialect. Prodicus' musical skill does not appear to be of universal importance. The reason for defending the poet in the first place appears to be heuristic, as Alcibiades says, Socrates too wants to win. Socrates wants to appear as Protagoras' adversary and so Socrates opposes Protagoras' on his own terms; Socrates defends the sophists or wise men of the past. Protagoras is self-consciously new or modern, while Socrates, though almost certainly more radically novel than Protagoras, aims to cover his novelty through his alliance with ancients times (c.f. 341a).

¹³³ See *Greater Hippias*, 282b-d.

¹³⁴ It is worth noting that if Protagoras is attacking the wise men of Ceos, then Hippocrates of Ceos ought to be included in the assaulted. This contrast brings up again Socrates' criteria for judging Protagoras which was established with Hippocrates at the beginning of the dialogue. By attacking Socrates through Simonides Protagoras may also be attacking the idea of the sophist as a doctor of the soul.

Socrates' correction of Protagoras' interpretation aims to make a distinction between becoming (*genesthai*) and being (*einai*). By making this distinction Socrates claims to save the contradiction in the poem. Simonides means to say that what is hard is to *become* a good man but not to *be* a good man. Socrates argues that this interpretation is consistent with Hesiod's famous aphorism that it is hard to become good, but once one becomes good it is not hard but easy. If Socrates and Prodicus' interpretation of the meanings of being and becoming hold, Simonides strictly speaking does not contradict himself.

Prodicus praises Socrates' restoration of the poem but Protagoras argues that the restoration is worse than the original. His objection to Socrates' cure for the apparent contradiction is that it makes Simonides look even more ignorant than in Protagoras' rendition of the poem because: "it would be great ignorance on the part of the poet if he asserts that virtue is something so paltry to possess, when it is the most difficult thing of all, as is the opinion of all human beings" (340e). Self contradiction is not therefore Protagoras' only criterion for judging whether a poem is correctly composed or not, it must also square with his judgment and it is Protagoras' judgment that virtue is hardest to possess as "it is the opinion of all human beings" (340e). Any argument being made contrary to Protagoras' judgment that virtue is the hardest to possess, as was the case with Protagoras' judgment that some may be wise but unjust, is simply incorrect because it does not save the appearances. Protagoras' objection is not necessarily that there is no difference between being and becoming only that it must be both hard to become and to be virtuous. Protagoras does not defend himself against the more important agreement Socrates obtained from Prodicus: that there is a difference between being and becoming.

Protagoras would undoubtedly agree there is a difference, but Protagoras' aim was not to discover Simonides' intention only the apparent contradictions in Simonides as a foil for his views. In short, the difference between the two is meaningless for Protagoras in this context. Socrates' and Prodicus' first attempt to check Protagoras' strength fails.

Protagoras' failure to concede the difference between being and becoming oddly removes the question of education from the discussion. This is important as it was precisely how men become good which Protagoras wanted to discuss. Socrates, when addressing the content of the poem, can now drop the question of how one becomes a good citizen and instead show what it is like to be a good citizen or a gentleman. This is not just rhetorical on Socrates' part as it affects what he later suggests they failed to do in the conversation: pursue the question of what is virtue. Leaving the question of becoming aside, Socrates can paint a picture of how one can be a good citizen (love one's own) and pursue higher ends (philosophy).

Socrates' second attempt to use Prodicus' ancient skill is to determine the meaning of hard (*chalepos*). Prodicus believes that *chalepos* generally means bad (*kakos*) though Protagoras immediately disagrees arguing that it only means painful or difficult. Socrates' second attempt appears to be a test as to whether Protagoras believes that the painful is good or bad. If the painful is bad then Protagoras would be arguing for the absurdity that it is bad to become good. Socrates blames his failed attempt to get Protagoras to contradict himself on Prodicus' skill, though he charitably adds that Prodicus must have been testing both he and Protagoras by equating the hard with the bad. At this point in the dialogue Protagoras does not equate pleasure with the good, or the painful with the bad. Socrates' and Prodicus' second attempt to check the power of

Protagoras fails. I will argue later that the arguments which culminate in the hedonistic calculus are badly in need of Prodicus' art, and thus the failure of Prodicus' art here is not the sum of what the *Protagoras* teaches about Prodicus.

Socrates' allusion to Achilles' battle with the river was prophetic: the alliance was doomed to fail. As a last stab at the poem, Socrates offers to present his full interpretation of Simonides' intention in the poem and Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus urge him to do so. Socrates does not mention to his narrator that he was surprised by his failed alliance with Prodicus. In fact, the quote from the *Illiad* suggests that perhaps Socrates knew that his alliance with Prodicus would fail. This may be because he knew that Prodicus' sophisticated musical skill was insufficient to check the strength of the great Protagoras. Socrates' strategy aimed to confirm what was implicit in Protagoras' attack on the ancients: that Protagoras did not seek to learn from the intentions of the ancients, but to use his disagreement with them as foil for his own teaching. Besides checking Prodicus' influence in the conversation Socrates meant for his dialogical strategy to fail so that he could respond more fully to Protagoras' more general strategy of presenting himself as an opponent of the ancient wisdom. Protagoras is a bad philologist because he aims to prove his point by purposely doing injustice to the one whom he interprets. The fact that Protagoras does not seem puzzled or curious about the distinction between being and becoming as it applies to the poem shows that Protagoras is not interested in learning from the verses as one might suspect from his earlier claim that the greatest part of education is in the interpretation and discussion of verses. It seems that what Protagoras aims to teach about verses is how to use the views of others to disguise your own. Protagoras and the ancient sophists do not appear to be so different after-all. With this

view now clear, Socrates offers his own interpretation of Simonides' poem promising to uncover his true intention. As with his earlier attempts to engage Protagoras it ought to be assumed Socrates will take the same philological liberties in his account as his great opponent.

2.6.4 Socrates' Account of Ancient Greek Wise Men

Socrates prefaces his defence of his view of the poem with an account of the origins of the wisdom of Greece, including the origins of the sayings inscribed at the Oracle at Delphi. This account is meant to be a response both to Hippias' claim that the wise are citizens by nature and to Protagoras' earlier account of sophists of old. Socrates' account is in three parts. The first part refutes Protagoras' view of ancient wisdom, that the ancients hide their teachings in other arts, with the aim of showing him that the truly wise do not claim to be wise, but council covertly. The second part is directed at the content of Socrates' claim that the poem teaches that Simonides is blaming Pittacus' saying that it is truly hard to be good. Lastly, Socrates ends his rebuff of Protagoras with his own account of why Simonides chooses to blame Pittacus, and by extension why Protagoras wants to refute Simonides: to satisfy his ambition to acquire a reputation for wisdom.

Socrates begins by giving his account of wisdom in the Greek world. As Socrates reproached Prodicus' skill in the previous exchange, he now takes aim at Hippias who stated earlier that Athens was the sanctuary for wisdom in Greece (337d). Socrates claims that not Athens, but Sparta, is actually the home for the wisest in Greece. Socrates claims that they do not have a reputation for entertaining sophists because they do not want the Greeks to believe that it is because of their love of wisdom that they hold ascendancy

over the Greeks. Many Greeks believe it is their militaristic way of life and thus military skill and courage which are the source of the greatness of the Spartans. This reputation invites emulation by Greeks ambitious for honour and success. Socrates argues that this reputation is a front, it is not chiefly the Spartans exoteric courage and fighting skill, but their esoteric love of wisdom which makes them the strongest of the Greeks. They hide this love as a strategy to remain ascendant. The critique of Protagoras' exoteric proclamations of wisdom and his privileging courage over wisdom are clear.

As proof that the Spartans are best educated Socrates offers the seemingly pithy yet wise remarks that even the Spartans of the meanest capacity work into their speeches. These remarks have as their source the laconic love of wisdom. The effect of hearing these remarks is like being struck suddenly by an expert javelin thrower. This pithy laconic delivery was the style of the wisdom of the ancients. Socrates cites, the Delphic sayings 'know thy self' and 'nothing in excess' as proof that the ancients' style of delivering their teaching was aphoristic.

The difference between the ancient style of teaching, which was esoteric, and Protagoras' novel exoteric style of teaching is the place of the love of honour. Modern wise ones, like Simonides, and by extension Protagoras, aim to refute the sayings of ancient wise men in their quest to win a reputation for wisdom. The ancient wise men of Greece, such as Pittacus, hide their love of wisdom in aphorisms. Socrates' opening account of education in Greece begins by distinguishing sophists from philosophers on the grounds of their aphoristic speech and their desire not to gain a reputation for wisdom. Socrates implicitly accuses Protagoras of being concerned solely for reputation in his interpretation of Simonides' poem. By ignoring the intention and instead focusing on apparent

contradiction, Protagoras' aim is not knowledge or wisdom but honour for wisdom. That the sayings of the ancient wise men of Greece have become famous, and that Socrates and Protagoras are known names, suggests that wise men will win reputation regardless of whether it is sought.

Socrates' praise of Sparta must have rung as ironic to the ears of his audience. Athens, as I have already argued, was most assuredly considered by most Greeks as the most powerful city in Greece. The contest between Athens and Sparta is thus presented by Socrates as the contest between sophistry and philosophy. The ancient philosophers did not hide their wisdom in the other arts, as did the ancient sophists, but instead hid their wisdom in pithy sayings. When Spartans had need to discuss with their philosophers openly, all foreigners were banished and only citizens were allowed to witness the deliberations. The Spartans are exoterically courageous and esoterically philosophic. The Athenians on the other hand pride themselves on their love of wisdom, while secretly practicing and praising the laconic pursuit of courage.

Socrates' analogy is mythic and is meant to parallel Protagoras' *mythos*. The full meaning of the myth is clarified when we compare Socrates' presentation with Protagoras' presentation. In Athens the population is free to have foreign sophists in the city. Many Athenians, such as Thucydides' Pericles, and Protagoras, believe that Athens is wise, strong and best among Greek cities for its love of wisdom. Athens, on Thucydides' Pericles and Protagoras' view, through her love of wisdom, and her military might, has overcome Sparta as dominant in Greece. Though Athens is strong and wise it has an imperfect and even hostile relationship with its sophists. Though it is true that many Athenians believe their strength is due to their love of wisdom, many Greeks are

laconizers (*lakonizontas*) because they believe that the manly virtues of war are what earned Sparta its reputation for strength in the past and what earned Athens her current reputation. After-all it was their military prowess at battles such as Thermopylae and Marathon that earned them their reputations and their pre-eminence. The Athenians outwardly say that their love of wisdom makes them strong, but in truth they believe that it is the manly virtues of war which have made them strong. The fates of Anaxagoras, Protagoras and Socrates suggest that the Athenians may even believe that the Sophists are a source of corruption and degeneration.

To save the reputation of wisdom among the Greeks, Socrates suggests another model for the relationship between wise men and political power. Socrates argues, counter to almost all experience, that it is not the case that the Spartans are powerful because of their courage, but rather because of their secret love of wisdom. Unlike Athens, which is conflicted about the role of wisdom in the city, and thus praises militaristic virtue and lets foreign sophists educate its young, Sparta knows that wisdom is strength and thus keeps it secret. Unlike in Athens where deception is required among the wise to prevent persecution from the many, Sparta's *laws* completely harmonize wisdom and political power through a secret council. The key to the strength of this council is the Spartans' policy towards foreigners. Unlike Athens, which lets foreigners educate its youth, Spartans let their laws educate their youth under the guidance of their sophists, which only give council in private. The tension implicit in a foreigner teaching a young citizen about politics is removed. The sophists of Sparta have an interest in giving council which is best for Sparta, and are not concerned about their reputations or love of money. Socrates implies, as he did earlier in his conversation with Hippocrates, that the

cosmopolitan and traveling lives of the sophists of Athens cast doubt on the political worth of their teaching.

The possibility of wisdom and power coming together in a modified Spartan regime is explored more fully in the *Laws* and the *Republic*. Here in the *Protagoras* it is striking that something like the nocturnal council of the *Laws* is offered as the correct relationship between wisdom and political power.¹³⁵ Socrates is intending to show Protagoras that his influence among the Greeks is imperfect and that he doesn't have the best relationship with the cities of Greece. Protagoras' misunderstanding of the best relationship between political power and knowledge stems from his relativistic view of convention. Protagoras argues that the laws do not serve the city in the most decisive way, but rather good leadership on policy, perhaps most especially foreign policy, is decisive for the city. The laws of the city do not educate the youth on ruling, but only on being ruled or obedience. The laws, rather than providing sound education in the virtues, teach that the virtues of justice and moderation are a necessary fiction to make the city possible. Protagoras' political teaching amounts to teaching masters how to persuade slaves to obey their rule. If a true education is one that is fitting for a man that is 'free,' Protagoras does not educate.

Socrates' presentation of how the seven sages of Greece married their wisdom with political power stands in contrast to Protagoras' account of how the sophists of old disguised their teachings to protect themselves against envy and persecution. The sophists of old hid their teachings in the arts and thereby gained fame among all the Greeks. The

¹³⁵ Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. with notes and interpretive essay by Thomas Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), book 12.

sophists of old were still cosmopolitan. The ancient philosophers were not cosmopolitan, but were Spartan and chose to hide their wisdom in the laws of the Spartans and at the oracle at Delphi, the centre of Greek religion. The ancient philosophers were content to let their wisdom rule indirectly, while the modern sophists try to rule directly.

2.6.5 Socrates Critique of the Contemporary Greek Wise Men

Socrates critique of contemporary Greek wise men is that they are more concerned with earning a reputation for being wise than actually loving wisdom. They treat training or exercise about the greatest things to be the same as training and competing for athletic contests. Simonides, a near contemporary, wrote the entire ode under investigation to prove that he was wiser than one of the ancient wise men of Greece, Pittacus. That this is by extension a criticism of Protagoras' use of the ode should by now be obvious, perhaps less obvious is that this is also a reproach of Prodicus' use of his musical skill.

Socrates only offers a detailed interpretation of the first line of the poem to support his interpretation and offers the rest in the form of an argument in prose arguing that it would take much longer to demonstrate everything in detail from the text itself. The character of Socrates' interpretation of the first line can be taken as representative of his method of interpretation as a whole. To support his reading that the entire ode was composed to prove that Simonides was wiser than Pittacus, Socrates rewrites the first line of the poem.

andr' agathon men alatheôs genesthai chalepon

a good man now truly it is difficult to become

Becomes (piecing together Socrates' changes from 343d - 344b)

men andr' agathon genesthai chalepon alatheôs

Now a good man it is truly difficult to become¹³⁶

Socrates interpretation seems to be a philological stretch and certainly does not attempt to do justice to the words as they would normally be understood. It is after making this move that Socrates presents his version of the disagreement between Simonides and Pittacus, or between contemporary Greek wisdom and Ancient Greek wisdom.

In presenting the disagreement this way Socrates will associate himself with Simonides or the contemporary view and Protagoras will be associated with Pittacus or the ancient view, inverting their initial stances. So though Socrates seems to praise the ancient or primordial view and Protagoras seems to criticise it, the deeper truth is that Protagoras, though self-consciously contemporary, is truly dependent on the older primordial wisdom, while Socrates, who seems to pay lip service to the ancients, is actually contemporary in the sense that he rejects the primordial view. Socrates' censor against Protagoras is thus the same one which Protagoras made against Socrates: he is accusing Protagoras of holding basically the same view as Simonides and the other poets he claims to criticize. In this way, Socrates' interpretation of the Simonides poem is a demonstration of Socrates' critique of the motion men in *Theaetetus* and *Laws*.¹³⁷ With this said it is misleading to completely conflate the views of Pittacus and Protagoras; they differ, as Protagoras himself argues, in how they present their wisdom publicly.

¹³⁶ See Coby, *Sophistic Enlightenment*, 112-126. His analysis of this section shows well how Socrates manipulates the grammar of the poem to present Simonides' wisdom as more or less consistent with his own.

¹³⁷ See Newell, *Ruling Passion*, chapter 2.

Protagoras is thus contemporary in the sense that he is lover of honour with regards to wisdom, but ancient in the sense that he holds views which are based on the primordial ontology. Socrates is contemporary in that his views are novel and ancient in that he does not merely seek a reputation for wisdom.

Pittacus' view about virtue is that it is hard, but possible to be noble (*esthlos*). As Socrates' exposition of Simonides' attack on this line shows, it has consequences for politics, especially in regards to justice. The question as Socrates treats it can be stated as follows: if one can be good, however hard it is to be so, one can be blamed for not being good. Goodness is then a product of human concern, as Protagoras' argues, and thus can be checked by human concerns, especially by the law and its justice. If goodness is not acquired by human concern, as Socrates at first presented himself as believing, then people cannot be blamed for not being good. From this we can see that Pittacus' position stands for Protagoras' view of virtue and Simonides' position stands for Socrates'. Simonides criticism of Pittacus is thus Socrates' criticism of Protagoras. If Socrates is successful in arguing his criticism through the poem, he has also proven successful at what Protagoras considers to be the greatest part of education. In short, if Socrates is successful his victory will be complete.

Pittacus argues that it is hard to be noble (*estholas*).¹³⁸ This saying makes justice in the city possible because human beings can be blamed and punished for their actions. On Protagoras' view, this would simply mean men can rightly be blamed, censored and punished for not following the laws of the city. It is possible yet hard to be noble on Protagoras' view because although one can be partly good by following justice and

¹³⁸ Socrates maintains Protagoras' conflation of the *agathos* with *estholos* for his interpretation of the poem.

moderation, one can also strive for full virtue as manly virtue. This is the most difficult thing, as all humans agree, because it is acquired, not only from the gifts of nature, but also by great capacity (*dunamus*) guided by art. The political consequence of this two-fold presentation of virtue is that virtue, which all must possess for the sake of the city, appears paltry and worthless, which is to say that justice and moderation appear paltry and worthless. So though the view that it is possible to be good appears to save justice, in the case of Protagoras' teaching, it actually undermines justice.

Socrates' original view is that becoming good seems to make justice impossible: that the good becomes good by no human concern. If the good do not become good by human concern how is justice possible? It would be unjust for the laws to prescribe punishment because no one is blame worthy. On closer examination, Socrates' understanding of Simonides' assertion that it is impossible to be just still saves justice as a serious concern. On Socrates' reading of Simonides, the problem with Pittacus' statement is that it allows too high a possibility for human virtue: it argues that an impossibility is possible. It is impossible because only gods are always good. On Simonides' view, human beings are bad in so far as all human affairs are subject to misfortune or catastrophe. To be good in this sense means to continue to be good over time and Socrates argues that necessity will make some bad. Pilots and farmers will appear bad, or at least insufficient, in the face of extreme weather. It is impossible for humans to be good, because it is impossible for them to control everything. It is possible, however, for humans to become good though it is hard to become good because of the limitations of human being.

The question then becomes, how do human beings become good and become bad? The good become good through learning to be good. A doctor becomes a doctor by learning

about what makes bodies healthy and sick. A doctor becomes a bad doctor when he loses the knowledge which he previously had about healthy and sickly bodies. But isn't a doctor in this sense a good doctor, which means that it is possible to be good? Yes, but this does not guarantee that he will be a good doctor forever; it is possible that he will become bad one, and, once bad, could become good again. A doctor, once a doctor, becomes bad when he forgets how to be a doctor. A bad doctor becomes good by recalling what he forgot or by learning more than he knew before. It is knowledge and recollection, on this analogy, which make human beings good and ignorance and forgetting which make them bad.

Socrates states in his own words that he does not believe that Simonides would be so ignorant to believe that anyone does anything evil willingly. This would seem to make justice as impossible as in the case of Pitticus' view, because it would not be just, though perhaps good, to punish or censor someone for doing something which they did not willingly do. At most, their crime would be akin to involuntary manslaughter.¹³⁹ Be this as it may, Socrates tacitly defines virtue so as to be consistent with his famous assertion that virtue is knowledge. Wisdom or knowledge, and not courage, is the paramount virtue.

Given this view of justice, how does the bad man praise and blame and how does the good man praise and blame? The noble and good man praises and loves all. Socrates interprets this to mean all of his own (346b). The good and the noble obviously praise willingly those who "work nothing shameful" but they also compel themselves to praise

¹³⁹ See *Republic of Plato*, 451b. On this view it would seem that all justice is like punishing someone for an involuntary crime. The result of this view would perhaps turn justice into something akin to the doctor's art for the body. See *Gorgias*, 464b-466a.

those of their own who are partly bad (. This must be the case because “all things are noble which are not mixed with the shameful” (346c) and no human being is perfectly noble. Thus the good and noble man praises all, some willingly and some by compulsion. The bad on the other hand censure and blame their own to avoid being held responsible for neglecting their own. They do not “love and praise all willingly” and then censure their own rather than taking care of them. On Simonides’ view, this bad man would in fact censure all of humanity “for the generations of fools is infinite” (346c). Since Simonides “loves and praises all” some willingly and some through compulsion, it is necessary to determine those whom he will censure, for surely he is censuring Pittacus. Simonides places his answer in the negative: he will not censure those, since he believes that all have some measure of badness, who are “neither bad/ Nor overly contentious, who knows Right as the benefactor/ or cities, a healthy man” (346c). Socrates calls this view the middle view because it is between “loving and praising all/willing whoever works nothing shameful” and censuring all “for the generations of fools are infinite.”

This view measures justice in the same way that Protagoras did, as necessary for the city, but is different in that knowledge and wisdom are the higher virtues not Protagoras’ “manly virtue.” Socrates, to defend Simonides, tries to incorporate elements of both his and Protagoras’ view offering a compromise or middle ground in their contest to gain honour or wisdom. Does Socrates’ critique undermine itself when he identifies himself with Simonides, whom he admits he has a love of honour for wisdom? Socrates’ life and death would seem to refute this suspicion. It would be safer to say that Socrates’ concern with honour had more to do with the honour due philosophy than the honour due to

Socrates, the philosopher.¹⁴⁰ Though one can separate concern for the honour of philosophy and concern for the honour of being a philosopher in thought, it is hard to separate the two in action.

Socrates' criticism of Protagoras' teaching can be summed as follows: Protagoras is justly blamed for lying about the greatest things. It is not courage which brings power and honour but wisdom. More than this, Protagoras' view of virtue divides virtue into separate, incommensurable camps. The virtues of justice, piety and moderation, are nothing more than sham virtues to make men governable, if little more than slaves.

2.6.6 Second Interruption 347a -348d

The conclusion of Socrates' interpretation marks the high point of the dialogue. As has been demonstrated, and will be clearer by the end of the interpretation, their disagreement about the Simonides poem is the most thorough and satisfying presentation of the philosophical and political differences between Protagoras and Socrates in the *Protagoras*. This disagreement is addressed again, in different terms, in the *Thaetetus*. From this point in the dialogue until the end, Socrates attempts to workout, with Protagoras' assistance, a more consistent philosophic account of virtue which is compatible with the basic principal of Protagoras' political philosophy, safety. Because of the inconsistencies in Protagoras' account of politics, the more consistent account of Protagoras' political teaching is also a less satisfying account of politics.

¹⁴⁰ See *Apology*. 20d-e. Socrates admits that his questioning of the people of Athens did give him a reputation for a kind of wisdom, human wisdom, as compared to the divine wisdom which the Sophists supposed themselves to possess. Protagoras sees Socrates' potential for gaining a reputation for wisdom among the Greeks at the end of the dialogue and Socrates makes no effort to contest Protagoras' praise.

With the conclusion of Socrates' interpretation of Simonides, Hippias praises Socrates' account and then offers to display his own account. Alcibiades interrupts, acting as guardian of the compromise struck between Socrates and Protagoras, and asks that they return to the questioning and answering as agreed. Socrates then delivers a speech, the aim of which appears to be to shame Protagoras into engaging in a dialogue with him.

He begins by challenging Protagoras' method of speaking through literary criticism. This challenge stings twice, as first Socrates has bested Protagoras' at literary criticism, his chosen mode of discussion, and second, Socrates now moves to demonstrate the worthlessness of such criticism. He argues that this mode of speaking is proper to "the *symposiois* of paltry and rustic humans" because they are not able to speak for themselves while drinking. Not only this but these kind of *symposiois* are usually conducted while flute-girls play, mixing music with their arguments. This produces a pleasant affect of drowning out the *logos* in their speeches. When gentlemen with education engage in *symposia* they banish all flute-players and dancers and listen to each other's voices in good order without interrupting, even after much wine.¹⁴¹ The difference between the two types of conversation is in their relative clarity and simplicity. The paltry type of symposium has a myriad of sounds, voices and spectacles leaving the attention of the companions to wonder and follow which ever pleases them most. The swirling vortex of speeches in Socrates' description of Callias' House comes to mind. The former type of symposium is ordered and carried along properly in common with all participating, if not through speaking, then through attentively listening. Though Hippias was quick to praise

¹⁴¹ This is yet another allusion to the *Symposium*, 176e. The conversation in the *Symposium* was conducted in exactly this way. The limits of this view of friendly symposia as the best arrangement for discussions is perhaps best highlighted by Alcibiades' late and boisterous entrance.

his host and his guests, Socrates criticises his host for organizing a gathering worthy of 'paltry and rustic human beings'.

The second criticism which Socrates offers concerning speaking through the voice of poetry is that the poet is not present and therefore cannot be asked to defend and explain his poem.¹⁴² This method, Socrates argues, is one which the many use because any view presented about the poem is impossible to refute. As Socrates' account of Simonides' point suggests, given a finite text, anything can be made of its meaning given a sufficiently complicated argument. The last part of his speech offers the model for how the refined speak. In these conversations each conversant questions and tests the other giving and taking arguments to test themselves against the truth of the matter spoken about.¹⁴³

Protagoras gives no sign one way or another as to whether he agrees to Socrates' procedure, so Alcibiades enlists Callias, as Protagoras' host, to compel Protagoras to enter the conversation. This attempt shames Protagoras and with the encouragement of all those present he agrees to take up the discussion in the form of answering Socrates'

¹⁴² See *Phaedrus* 274c-277d for Socrates' extended arguments on this same point.

¹⁴³ Socrates' criticism applies as much to Plato the author of the *Protagoras*, as it does to Protagoras the character. This is a clear instance where Plato and Protagoras are in agreement against Socrates. After-all, Plato and Protagoras agree on at least one thing, it is worthwhile to write books. Plato after-all never speaks in the dialogues and all we think we know of his thought comes from reading his presentation of the views of Socrates and all the other characters of the dialogues. It could almost be said that Plato himself believes, along with Protagoras, that the 'greatest part of education is in the interpretation and discussion of poetry'. If Socrates is correct that it is futile to argue about the intention of an author how then can the study of the Platonic dialogues be justified? The answer on these terms must be implicit in how we have gone through Simonides' poem and the dialogue to this point: that is to follow how the conversation uncovers or illuminates what seem to be the subjects of the dialogue, virtue, sophistry, education etc. and test them against the truth. The dialogues are not just speeches, but like Socrates' interpretation of the Simonides', are dialogues about topics of concern to the characters. It is through following the dialogue and engaging in dialogue, as it were, with the text that the Platonic dialogue is justified. They are ultimately meant to seduce to philosophy. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translation by Walter Kaufman: *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), pp 225-256; the whole of Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1952); and Leon Craig's prologue and notes to *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), xiii-xxxvii.

questions. It is especially embarrassing for Protagoras to be ashamed if shame is really only, as Protagoras earlier argued, a product of convention necessary to ground the city.

2.7 Socrates' Second Socratic Response

For the third major time in the dialogue Socrates' compares his activity in the dialogue to the poetry of Homer.¹⁴⁴ The first was a comparison to *Odysseus'* journey to Hades in his initial descent into Callias' House. The second was a comparison to the *Iliad* and compared an alliance in Achilles' battle with the river to Socrates failed alliance with Prodicus. Here he compares his and Protagoras' pursuit of the question of virtue, to the *Iliad* again, when Odysseus and Diomedes ally to raid the Trojan camp.

The quote comes from book 10 of the *Iliad* and refers to Diomedes' answer to Nestor's challenge to win great glory and feasts for having raided the sleepy Trojan camp.¹⁴⁵ Diomedes answers the challenge, but then suggests that a pair of marauders will have more confidence and chance of success. Nestor agrees and asks that Diomedes pick one comrade to take up the challenge with him. He chooses Odysseus and they plunder the Trojan lines stealing the great horses of a Thracian King after killing thirteen men.

Of first importance is that, unlike Socrates' first quote, where he compares himself to Odysseus, Protagoras is now compared to Odysseus. The image Socrates invokes, as with Socrates' discussion of the Simonides poem, foreshadows the inversion of Socrates' and Protagoras' positions at the end of the dialogue. The meaning of this inversion will be

¹⁴⁴ For an engaging account of the broader use of Homer in Plato. See Zdravko Planinc, *Plato through Homer : poetry and philosophy in the Cosmological dialogues*. Columbia (London: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

¹⁴⁵ Homer, *Illiad*, 10.200.

discussed later but it is useful at this point to note that Socrates seems to have this inversion in mind as part of his dialectical strategy with Protagoras and that it is not an accidental outcome of their encounter.

The second quote implies that as Diomedes and Odysseus maraud for glory, so too will Socrates and Protagoras finish the argument. The question is then whether Socrates has chosen Protagoras to enter into a joint quest for glory or whether Socrates has another aim in mind. As the discussion will show, their common ground is the defence of the reputation of wisdom in the eyes of the many. Socrates and Protagoras, and eventually all the sophists present at Callias' house, develop a defence of wisdom's reputation, or at least a defence of knowledge's reputation, as a virtue to the many.

The third point is that unlike Socrates' comparison of himself and Prodicus to Scamander and Simoeis, and Protagoras to Achilles, where the metaphor implies a failed venture, this metaphor implies a successful and glorious venture. More precisely it does not represent a 'victory' of Socrates over Protagoras, but rather a compromise and shared victory with Protagoras. Socrates the philosopher and Protagoras the sophist are comrades in arms and are victorious in their pursuit to defend the reputation of wisdom among the many. This must be kept in mind as we evaluate this final exchange.

Lastly, this is the third time that Protagoras has been compared by Socrates to an ancient Greek hero. The first comparison is to Orpheus, the second to Achilles and the third and final to Odysseus. Socrates, on the other hand, has compared himself to three heroes: Odysseus, Scamander, and Diomedes. Socrates began his quest to Callias House by searching for Tiresias, a wise man. Once there he found only Orpheus, an impressive

figure to be sure, but known more for his musical power than his wisdom. Next, this Orpheus metamorphosed into a 'raging Achilles' and tried to do battle with Socrates, even when he secured the help of another god, Prodicus. Eventually Socrates was able to wear down the great warrior, who was transformed into an Odysseus, taking Socrates' place as the one known for his great journey and wily tactics in war. Socrates, now becomes Diomedes (whose name means god-counselled), and is reputed to be a great-warrior. This god - counselled warrior, now enlists the wily Odysseus in a quest for glory. This movement suggests not only the supposed inversion of positions at the end of the dialogue but also an inversion of intentions. The metaphors suggest that Socrates' quest for a wise man was transformed to quest for the glory of philosophy. For Protagoras' part, he began the dialogue by appearing as a mystical musical enchanter who became, after showing his true colours as a furious warrior, a more subtle and calculating man. It is important to note that the figure of Odysseus is ambiguous. He is known as being a fearsome warrior, but he is also known for his wiles and tactics and his great Odyssey. Protagoras may be stung by philosophy, but the end of the dialogue suggests that he is only briefly pacified and that, perhaps being too old, returns to his old ways of pretending to be a musically sophisticated seducer while truly searching for glory and contests to test his great strength.

2.7.1 On the Unity of Virtue III: Courage and Knowledge 348c – 351b

Socrates argues that Protagoras is his proper interlocutor to discuss virtue. Protagoras not only distinguishes himself as a gentleman (*kalos k'agathos*), but also claims to be able to

make others so, and not only this, but he has such confidence in his ability that he openly claims to charge a fee to make others good and to be a teacher of virtue. This, according to Socrates, makes Protagoras the best to consult with about Socrates' belief that virtue is not acquired by human care.

Socrates begins his questioning with a return to the question of the unity of wisdom, moderation, courage, justice and piety. Socrates asks Protagoras again whether he still agrees that the names of the virtues "do not pertain to one thing, that all are parts of virtue, not as parts of gold are similar to one another...but as parts of the face are dissimilar" (349c). Protagoras, based on his prior defeat, picks a third position. He says that most of the virtues are similar, "but courage is very different from them all:" for "many human beings are very unjust, very impious, very licentious, and very unlearned but who are very courageous" (349d). Protagoras seems to shift to the claim in his 'Great Speech' that virtue is unified as manly virtue. Courage, as we analyzed above, was the only virtue based in nature and art and seemed to make possible the higher political virtues. Protagoras' position is that it is courage above all the virtues which must be present to attain the highest political virtue. Courage is the ground of what Protagoras takes to be virtue.

Socrates begins his conversation with Protagoras by getting an agreement that the courageous are both bold and noble and that the whole of courage is noble, unmixed with the shameful (see 346c). With this agreement, Socrates cites three examples of courageous men, divers, horseman and infantrymen, who engage in dangerous activity and are bold because they are knowledgeable. Socrates asks whether there are those who are bold while being ignorant of the skills involved, Protagoras says there are. Socrates

then asks whether the ignorant who are bold are also courageous. Protagoras does not agree because courage would then become base or shameful. Socrates then asks whether the ignorant are bold but mad and not courageous and whether the wisest would not be the boldest and hence the most courageous. Protagoras does not assent to this because he does not agree that all of the bold are courageous. Rather, Protagoras argues that, though all of the courageous are bold, not all of those who are bold are courageous. Protagoras complains that using Socrates' specious logic, one could demonstrate that even the strongest are the wisest through their knowledge of wrestling. The argument, however, only aims to demonstrate that strength *can* come from wisdom. It does not preclude other sources such as spirit (*thumos*) and madness. Protagoras argues that courage comes from both nature, as we demonstrated earlier, as well as the nurture (*eutrophias*) of souls (351b).

Socrates does not take issue with Protagoras' rejoinder. This is not to say that it cannot be rejoined. Protagoras, though correct in his dissection of Socrates' logic, ignores the fundamental issue of which power makes a bold action a virtuous action. Protagoras has already eliminated madness as a potential source for virtue and here he seems to be implying that spirit (*thumos*) as well as art (*techne*) might also be sources for virtue.¹⁴⁶ If virtue is part nature and part nurture, whether that be education in art (*techne*) or some other cultivation, then it cannot be universally taught. At 352b-c, Socrates offers sources which people blame when they act poorly, and, transferred into the current context

¹⁴⁶ This line of inquiry is not followed up in the *Protagoras* but is more extensively pursued in the *Republic*. These theme is explored at length throughout Waller R. Newell's *Ruling Passion* and Leon H. Craig's *The War Lover*.

concerning the sources of self-rule, the list becomes illuminating: in addition to *thumos*, Socrates adds pleasure, pain, *eros* and fear.

Thumos and *eros* are markedly absent from Protagoras' and Socrates' account of virtue, while knowledge, pleasure, pain and fear feature prominently. Is it Socrates' aim to demonstrate to Protagoras what would actually be involved in claiming to the general public that one could teach virtue for a fee? Can a certain kind of virtue be taught through a 'carrots and sticks' approach to guiding behaviour? Though our analysis of Protagoras' myth shows that he does not believe that all can be taught, his advertisement of his skill, as Hippocrates' admiration of Protagoras shows, gives the impression to the many that he possess the universal art of teaching virtue (see also 310d). Socrates' demonstration of how knowledge informs virtue seems to be a demonstration to Protagoras about what kind of teaching he would have to profess to make good on his claim to *teach* virtue as opposed to merely *training* his students in certain behaviours.

2.7.2 On the Unity of Virtue IV: Pleasure and Living Well 351b – 352e

Socrates does not question Protagoras about the soul or how nature and nurture combine as sources of virtue. Prodicus's distinction between the body and soul does not arise. Socrates' next approach to Protagoras' views is to clarify how he sees the connection between virtue and living well. This marks a major change in the dialogue as it moves the discussion from living virtuously to living well (*eu z(e)n*). The difference between practicing virtue and living well would seem to be slight, if any real difference exists at all. However, to Socrates' mind, and almost certainly to Prodicus' musical skill, the

difference is significant. The key to suspecting that Socrates means to distinguish between living well and living virtuously is that Socrates never asks Protagoras if by living well one lives virtuously. Rather, he only asks whether living well is living pleasantly. The word Socrates' uses here for living is related to the same word used to describe animals as a class (*zoa* versus *zoon*). Living well may mean living pleasantly and the many humans may agree, but this does not necessarily imply living pleasantly is living a fully human and therefore virtuous life. Socrates significantly lowers the bar to their common pursuit. But is it unjust that Socrates does so? Given Protagoras' emphasis on punishment for training the many to be virtuous, it is perhaps fitting that they leave out consideration of more human ways of ruling.

Protagoras does notice this lowering of the bar and he ultimately accepts it for the purpose of convincing the many that knowledge can rule. Socrates attempts to get Protagoras to agree that living well is living pleasantly and living pleasantly is good and that living poorly is living in distress and this is bad. Protagoras agrees that is the case except that one "should live [one's] life by taking pleasure in the noble things" (351c). Socrates asks in mock shock whether Protagoras agrees with the many that some distressful things are good and some pleasant things bad. Protagoras does not give a simple response, but states that rather than agreeing that the pleasant is the good and the distressful bad, on consideration of the whole of his life and those present, it is safer to say that some things which are pleasant are not good and some painful things are not bad (351d). Socrates then asks further whether this is true of pleasure itself or whether it is true simply of those things which produce pleasure. Socrates wishes to discover from Protagoras whether there is standard for living well separate from pleasure itself, whether

the noble and the good are defined by more than calculation about pleasure. Protagoras does not know off hand which of the two ways he would answer and instead asks that Socrates lead an investigation into the subject (351e). That Protagoras does not or cannot formulate an argument for virtue as the ground for living well as opposed to living pleasantly suggests that in spite of his more noble beliefs concerning pleasure and pain, Protagoras ultimately believes that the pleasant is the good. In passing the reigns of the discussion to Socrates, Protagoras accepts how Socrates lowers the aim of the conversation and will be rebuked later when he questions the need to consider such a low account of living well.

Protagoras' initial response to Socrates, that living well is not merely living pleasantly but living while taking pleasure in noble things, is never explored on its own. Socrates quickly moves to identify the noble with good. The identification of the noble and the good has great consequences in the context of the argument. Though eating nourishing food is a good pleasure for the body it is not necessarily a noble pleasure. The conflation of the good and the noble allows for the conflation of necessity and choice or the unnecessary, it seems therefore to collapse the realm of virtue to the realm of necessity. What is missing by conflating the noble and the good are those human affections which strive for distinction or transcendence, what is missing is an account of how *thumos* and *eros* contribute to living well. What is missing, in short, is a consideration of the soul.

Socrates continues his lead with an analogy meant to clarify his intention in questioning Protagoras. As a doctor would ask after having examined his patients hands and face that his patient disrobe so he may thoroughly check his health, so too Socrates wishes to disrobe and thoroughly examine Protagoras' relationship with knowledge, especially after

hearing from him about the pleasant and the good. As Protagoras agreed with Socrates' many, who think that some pleasures are noble and some base, Socrates wishes to discover whether Protagoras agrees with the many in regards to knowledge. The many, on Socrates account, believe that "knowledge isn't a strong thing characterised by either leadership or rule" but rather something slavish which is ruled ignorantly and variously by spirit, pleasure, pain, erotic love and fear (352b-c). Protagoras answers that it would be shameful for him not to agree that wisdom and knowledge are not the mightiest of the human things. Socrates answers by stating that Protagoras has indeed spoken nobly and truly.¹⁴⁷

Socrates then recasts his dispute with Protagoras as a common disagreement which he and Protagoras have with the many regarding knowledge. The many do not believe that knowledge rules and being overcome is due to ignorance, but instead they believe that being overcome is due to pleasure and pain. By transforming the question from virtue to living well, Socrates has transformed the question to one of self-rule. The question is no longer whether one is courageous or just, but rather what controls and rules one's actions. This investigation would be the beginning of determining which actions are virtuous and which are not. The source of self-control would also be the source of virtue.¹⁴⁸

It can be inferred from the silent drop of *eros* and *thumos* that they are not important when discussing knowledge with the many, for experience shows that the many do not have great *thumos* or *eros*. However, given their importance in dialogues related to the *Protagoras*, such as *Symposium*, *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, this is not to say that they

¹⁴⁷ This implies a difference between the noble and the true. We will return to this subject in the conclusion.

¹⁴⁸ See Craig. *War Lover*, chapter 4.

are not important for discussing knowledge and virtue simply. Their exclusion from Socrates' second (352e) list shows both the limitation and the significance of the *Protagoras*.

The limitation can be seen in Protagoras' belief that courage is the highest of the virtues. It is because Protagoras holds the view that the many are overcome by pleasure and pains that he believes courage is different and one of the greatest virtues; courage allows men to control themselves and gives them the ambition to seek notoriety and victory. It is ultimately this belief of Protagoras' which justifies Socrates declaring that their discussion with the many is relevant to their enquiry about courage (353b). That Protagoras believes the many are ruled by their pleasures and pains is apparent from his account in his *logos* of how the city 'educates,' or rather, trains, its citizens in virtue. If a man is to rise above the conventions of the city he must be able to control himself in the face of fears, pleasures and pains. On Protagoras' view one could hold all of the other virtues, justice, wisdom, piety and moderation, but still not attain the highest notoriety in the city because this is impossible without spirit (*thumos*) and courage (351a). It is because courage gives a man the capacity for his ascent from convention to notoriety that courage is noble and wholly noble.

There is an apparent ambiguity in the account here. Socrates seems to identify pleasures, pains, as well as fears, with the virtue of courage. It would appear that it is moderation and not courage which principally pertains to pleasures and pains. On closer examination of Protagoras' account in the 'great speech', however, moderation was never characterized as pertaining to pleasures and pains, but to shame, especially what is deemed shameful by the city. Moderation pertains as much to *thumos* as *epithumos*. For

this reason moderation is not sufficient for a noble life because shame is tied to convention and the unconventional is required for nobility and notoriety. In Protagoras' speech he does not explicitly speak of courage, but does speak of cowardice, and cowardice can be checked through a rigorous training of the body (326b-c). Though it does not follow necessarily, this seems to be Socrates' basis for suspecting that Protagoras believes that controlling one's self in the face of fears as well as pleasures, but most especially pains, pertains to courage.

2.7.3 The Many's Art of Living Well: Artful Hedonism 352e – 358a

Socrates recasts his dispute with Protagoras as a common disagreement which he and Protagoras have with the many regarding knowledge. The many do not believe that knowledge is capable of ruling and that erring or being overcome is due to ignorance. The many believe that erring is due to being overcome by pleasure and pain. Protagoras is puzzled by Socrates' desire for them to speak and persuade the many about knowledge because "they say whatever happens to occur to them" (353a). Protagoras' view of the many as being simply ruled by convention comes again to the surface. Protagoras to this point has only viewed the opinions of the many as merely random and insubstantial. He has not suspected that they could be guides for investigating virtue. It is for this reason that he has not attempted to reconcile how the virtues of being ruled are unified as virtues to the virtues needed to rule. Through Socrates' and Protagoras' focus on the virtues of the many who are ruled, the argument will be a demonstration to Protagoras, if Socrates is successful, of how the highest of the virtues, wisdom or knowledge, are needed even for the most paltry of virtues, moderation and justice. In short, it should demonstrate to Protagoras that knowledge rules, not pleasure, pain or fear.

Returning to Socrates answer to Protagoras' question about the need to consider the opinions of the many, he states that it is necessary for the enquiry into courage, and to prevent further quibbling on the matter threatens Protagoras that if he is not willing to abide by his earlier agreement he will depart. Protagoras agrees to allow Socrates to lead.

Socrates sets out, with Protagoras help, to persuade the many that error in action is not due to being overcome by pleasure, but rather due to ignorance. Socrates conducts the discussion as a mock dialogue with the many. The many begin by questioning Socrates and Protagoras about what overcomes if it is not pleasure? Socrates, in his usual style, attempts to clarify what his dialogical partners believe: Socrates restates that the many believe the reason they do injurious activity is that they are overcome by the pleasures of food, drink and sex. Socrates then wishes to know what the many mean by injury, whether it is because of the pleasure which overcame them or the illness or poverty which was the consequence of being overcome. Socrates solicits Protagoras' agreement that it is considered injurious because of the consequences which occur later. The many's position is then that if pleasures cause illness or poverty then they are bad because illness or poverty cause distress and pain. Conversely, Socrates secures agreement that pains which are called good are not good when they are painful, but good because of their consequences, as is the case with pains from athletic training, military service or medical treatment. Socrates finally asks whether the activities of the many are judged by any other end (*telos*) than pursuit of pleasures and release from pains, or whether there is another end by which they judge the good and bad. Protagoras agrees there is no other end by which they would judge and Socrates then reconfirms with Protagoras in three

separate formulations and qualifications that human beings pursue pleasure as good and flee pain as bad, judging by no other end (354b-a).

With the premise that pleasure itself is good and pain itself is bad, Socrates puts forward a hypothetical argument demonstrating to the many their experience of being overcome when they know better. Socrates states the argument with the condition that there is no other standard to judge the good and bad than that of pleasure and pain. If some other standard could be found, Socrates' argument would not hold as sufficient (354e-355a).

Socrates focuses on two particular aspects of the many's thesis of why people do things which hurt them: the first is that the many are overcome because they are led on and confused by pleasure and the second is that a human being never willingly forgoes doing good because he is overcome by the pleasures of the moment. Socrates argues that the absurdity of these theses can be seen very clearly by ceasing to use many words, good and pleasant, and bad and distressing, when any two would be sufficient. Here Socrates' implies the inverse of Prodicus' musical art, instead of dividing synonyms he here demands that they be collected under two groups. Socrates demonstrates this by first substituting good for pleasant and bad for distressing and then the reverse (355b-356a).

The consequences of the first substitution are evaluated through an examination of what the many mean when they say they are overcome with pleasure. To be overcome by pleasure means on the previous argument to be overcome by the good. It is then asserted as ridiculous that someone could do something he knows to be bad because he is overcome by the good. Socrates then asks the many whether this is because the good things do not deserve to be overcome by the bad or the reverse. Socrates answers it must

be that the good do not deserve to be overcome by the bad or else it would be improper to say they erred in being overcome. Since there is no other standard by which to judge the good and the bad but by quantity (all pleasures and distresses being equal in kind), the many understand being overcome to mean taking many bad things over fewer good things.

Socrates then moves to the consequences of the second substitution. The many's former statement that they do distressing things knowing them to be distressing because they're overcome by pleasure would negate the idea that pleasure ought to win out. After-all, absent another end, what could there be to judge this except relative pleasure and distress? Therefore, on the same grounds the person has erred because he has taken a lesser pleasure for a greater distress.

The many then attempts a rejoinder to Socrates and Protagoras by stating there is a great difference between a pleasure in the moment and a pain in the future. Socrates agrees but asks what this difference consists of except more or less pleasure and pain. With the notion of foresight introduced, Socrates then demonstrates how there would be an art in measuring pleasures and pains which would be the art of living well. This skill would consist only in measuring the quantity of pleasures and pains, for any distinction between pleasures and pains has no meaning when the pleasure is the same as the good and the painful the same as the bad.

Socrates continues his proof by asking whether large things appear smaller when far away and small things larger when they are close.¹⁴⁹ The many agree and the

¹⁴⁹ *Republic of Plato*, 368b-e.

consequence is drawn that the art of living safely would consist in skilled measurement (*he metrikeike techne*) rather than appearance. It cannot be appearance because, as was demonstrated, it is precisely appearance which confuses the short and long term. In matters of life and death appearance is an insufficient guide, what is required is true perception, which on the premises established above could be nothing other than true measurement.

This kind of art of measurement has an end which appears to be the condition for experiencing the good: living safely. To live safely is to live free from danger of physical harm or perhaps even the threat of physical harm. This assumption about the art of measurement introduced by Socrates is not explicitly discussed, which is only to say that its implications must be brought out by the interpreter. Living safely is a chosen strategy when the good is the same as pleasant and the bad is the same as distress or pain. It assumes that pleasure is as good in quantity as pain is bad in quantity and thus the best strategy would be to organize your life around minimizing risk of pain and establishing the grounds for experiencing some pleasure. However, this is not the only strategy. Another approach to a measured life on these premises could be to risk great pain for the sake of great pleasure, a drug addict's approach, or a wrestler's or a well – diver's, for example. This is the Epimethean approach as it neglects to take into account the long term or the whole. Socrates' Promethean strategy is the moderate strategy and is premised on the belief that peoples' fear or distress for their well being is itself a pain. It is the expectation of future harm and future pleasure and the desire to secure pleasure and avoid pain which leads to the safe strategy. If pains and pleasure can be measured then

this art of measuring excess and deficiency would appear as a kind of arithmetic (*arithmetike*) and, as a kind of arithmetic, a kind of knowledge (*episteme*).

Socrates' account of this knowledge would be incoherent politically if he did not provide his Promethean criteria of measuring pleasures and pains: safety. Without this standard of measurement it would be impossible to present this account as politically responsible. The epimethean pursuit of intense pleasures, which would lead to an early death, might prove to have greater pleasure than living a long and moderate life filled with little pain or little pleasure. Should this prove to be the case, the epimethean life would be the rational and justified way of life. If measurement lay only in the difference between pleasure and pain, might not the difference between the pleasures of an epimethean hedonistic life prove greater than the pains of such a life even compared to a long promethean life of little pain and little pleasure? Or less radically: is the pleasure of sex and companionship with one person worth the pains and pleasures of nurturing children? Is the convention of marriage defensible if all pleasures are equally pleasures and thus equally good? More than this, how can the virtue of justice be defended except as a means for securing the city and, as a means, only the appearance of this virtue would be necessary. Similar considerations could be made in regard to courage, moderation and piety. The hedonistic calculus defends the Protagorean view of virtue.

The principle of safety makes this doctrine compatible with Protagoras' account of political life and, interestingly, more compatible with political life *per se* than Protagoras' original account. On Protagoras' account, convention and art are required to create cities for men because nature on its own has insufficiently equipped men to live together. Men living only by nature are as animals ready to war with each other because there is no

justice, friendship nor shame to bind them together. What makes the city possible and thus the survival of the human species are the laws of the city, especially the punishments they prescribe which constrain the citizens to conventions which are otherwise groundless. On the basis of the calculus, it becomes the legislator's duty to prescribe the right punishments so as to make living within the law the best means for the citizen's safety. If the Promethean criteria of safety rules over the epimethean criteria of instant satisfaction, then all of the conventions which make the city possible are justifiable. Laws are needed to check epimethean temptation for injustice and hubris and make possible the more reasonable and human promethean calculations. Art, which is the benefactor of mankind, is fully supported by convention to fulfill the wants of nature.

But another problem lies in what we mean by the 'wants of nature.' Not all human beings have the same desires and ambitions. As already mentioned an epimethean approach to the hedonistic calculus might supplant the short term for the long term and result in wasted lives. But it is also not clear that the promethean approach would necessarily lead to the pursuit of the virtues needed for citizenship as Protagoras outlines them. What if someone taking the promethean approach also had promethean ambitions? The idea of the pleasure which an Alcibiades or Alexander has in his mind for being ruler of the world would make the calculations of the many regarding their safety appear petty and worthless. Because justice and all the other virtues have been relegated to prudential considerations regarding pleasure, the hedonistic calculus could be employed for pursuing great as well as petty aims. This potential in the calculus also shows the potential in Protagoras' own teaching for fostering hubristic ambition. This potential underlines even

more forcefully the need to ground the virtues in something else besides pleasure and pain.¹⁵⁰

Socrates has outlined the condition for Protagoras' political science and thereby established its worth. Socrates has also provided a unified ground of virtue from Protagoras' political science. This calculus thus seems to be a demonstration to Protagoras that the worth of his teaching could only be properly seen by thinking through the prior question of the unity of the virtues. It is thus a demonstration to Protagoras that he too should, like Socrates, become a lover of wisdom.

With this established, Socrates states that the argument was required because the many would not have believed that what dominates a human being is knowledge and ignorance not pleasure and pain. When the many believed that being overcome by pleasure was the cause of their erring in action, what they did not realise was that they were truly being overcome by the greatest ignorance. And it is this ignorance which Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus and the other sophists have the expertise to cure. It is for this reason that the many ought not to hoard their money and neglect to send their children to the sophists because their children will lack this skill of measurement necessary for success in public and private life.

2.8 Socrates' Common Argument with Protagoras, Prodicus and Hippias

Once Socrates outlined his account of how to convince the many that knowledge could rule and that this kind of teaching was a cure for their ignorance about self-rule, Socrates

¹⁵⁰ See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, pp 108-117.

elicits agreement that it is by expertise in this kind of knowledge that sophists are properly called doctors.

At the beginning of the dialogue Socrates outlined to Hippocrates the criteria by which they would judge the sophists' vocation. A sophist was nothing but a dangerous merchant of learnable, if he was determined to be ignorant of the worth of his products yet still willing to praise their worth. Sophists on this account were even more dangerous than merchants because what they sell affects something which is more important than the body, the soul. At the beginning of the dialogue, Protagoras openly proclaimed that he could educate and teach the political art and that if a young citizen was ambitious to become notable in the city, he could teach him how to become notable. That Protagoras can educate men to become notable in the city was never doubted by Socrates and the 'successes' of those present at Protagoras' house in becoming noteworthy is evidence that, in a certain sense, Protagoras does not deceive his students. With that said, this does not mean that Protagoras was fully aware of the implications of his teaching: if Protagoras teaches a kind of self-rule through skilled measurement of consequences of action he is shown to be ignorant in not teaching his students mathematics. This is necessary because the precision of mathematics, or at least as much precision as human affairs allow, is necessary or desirable when engaging in the life and death realm of politics. Protagoras' neglect of the subjects which, on first glance, appear to be tangential for action in politics, now appear as necessary if one wishes to engage in politics artfully. As Socrates declines to investigate exactly of what kind of knowledge, knowledge of living well is composed, we cannot determine how and in what way Socrates would have attempted to display politics as something which can be reduced to mathematical

precision. One place to look for such a demonstration may be *The Statesmen*. What is clear is that Protagoras does have an account of the worth of his political teaching, though as Socrates presentation of the hedonistic calculus shows, its worth appears much paltrier than Protagoras stated in their exchange earlier in the dialogue.

The shortcomings of Protagoras' political teaching become clearer when compared against the higher claims which are associated with Protagoras' wisdom: that he can teach people good counsel (318d-319a), how to become better (318a) and even how to become gentlemen (*kalos k'agathos*) (348e), if not simply wise (309c). Taking the last of the list first, that Protagoras is not wise is demonstrated by a contradiction in Protagoras' own presentation of virtue. Protagoras claims to teach men virtue yet he cannot account for a fundamental confusion in his teaching, whether manliness (*andrea*) is the highest of virtues or whether wisdom (*sophia*) is the highest of virtues. Put another way, Protagoras does not know whether it is higher to know and teach others to act or whether the acting itself is higher. This fundamental confusion is analogous to his confusion about whether it is the pleasure of an action or the consequences of the action which make it good. This confusion in Protagoras' teaching compels him to take the mercenary standard of political effectiveness as axiomatic. This standard is not noble but necessary for the sake of the city and necessary as the grounds from which political judgments must be made. A sober politician must understand that convention, though groundless and thus merely convention, is necessary and is the substance of politics. Thus the politics of the many amounts for Protagoras to passing laws which give convention force. The force of convention is grounded in a sense of right, shame and friendship, but also, no less importantly, from the courts and police which enforce them.

But politics, thus understood, loses all of its appeal for gentlemen. The fact that Protagoras' instinct is for the noble shows that knowledge of politics thus understood is also less appealing for the sophist. If all convention is mere convention, then the fame which comes from politics is an illusion. The pursuit of honour is meaningless. What worth could recognition from the many have, understood the way that Protagoras understands them? But as the list of Protagoras' aspirations shows, his political philosophy aims to be nobler than it actually is. Protagoras wants to educate gentlemen (*kalos k' agathos*) in the art of politics and not educate barbaric tyrants. His political philosophy, though it clearly and perhaps soberly expects little from the many, is conscious that it is the many's belief in convention which makes the city possible. What Socrates' hedonistic calculus teaches the sophists is that their brand of teaching is no more noble than learning to manipulate the tastes of the many for the sake of power and notoriety. In order for this notoriety to be noble, politics must be noble. What is lacking among the sophists is an understanding of what makes politics noble. This account is lacking because the sophists do not distinguish between the body and the soul. Or more accurately they have not thought through sufficiently the distinction between the body and the soul. To acquire this knowledge the sophist must become better psychologists, and thus become better students of the poets, whom Protagoras derides for hiding their knowledge. They must become better psychologists because even if the soul can be reduced to experiences of pleasure and pain, the sources of those pleasures and pains vary greatly: from the body, from fear, from *thumos*, and from *eros*. Working out a better understanding of the soul would allow them to work out a more satisfying teaching regarding politics.

Without this understanding, their teaching is not only unsatisfactory, but also dangerous. The hellish setting where Socrates' encounters Protagoras implies that the teachings of the sophists, even the most politic of them, are ultimately debasing. This politics is debasing because it treats people as if they are all body and little soul; in other words, like animals. This is demonstrated most clearly in Protagoras' account of punishment. Law only makes virtue possible through threat of punishment. No attempt is made beyond recognizing convention is necessary to defend the laws as good. In other words convention is taken as a given and Protagoras ignores the difference between regimes. That a regime is democratic or tyrannical seems to matter little except that democratic regimes are more open to paying Protagoras' fees. But besides this fact, there is nothing in Protagoras' account which would distinguish tyrannical laws from just laws. To differentiate between regimes, an account of the soul is required.¹⁵¹ Even Hippias' preference for Athens is based on the premise that wisdom is the highest virtue and the laws of Athens protect wise men.

Returning to the text, Socrates clarifies this point by obtaining all of the Sophists' agreement at each step of his presentation of the conclusion of their dialogue with the many. The Sophists agree that "the pleasant is good and the distressing is bad" (358a). Socrates asks Prodicus' leave to not quibble about which names stand in for the pleasant (whether they are gladdening, enjoying). Prodicus laughs and consents. He is the only character of the dialogue to laugh. The room is full of men, who if nothing else, take what

¹⁵¹ Of course he could take Hobbes' approach to the question concerning regimes, which is to distinguish them solely on the basis of how they select their ruling class. See William Mathie, "Justice and the Question of Regimes in Ancient and Modern Political Philosophy: Aristotle and Hobbes" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (Vol. 9, No. 3 (Sep., 1976), pp. 449-463". See also Leon Craig's *War Lover* pp 22-41 for his account of the degeneration of regimes as different orientations towards love of honour and love of money.

they have to say and their arts extremely seriously. That Prodicus' laughs, and Hippias and Protagoras do not, seems to demonstrate something about the hedonistic calculus, which Socrates has deduced for the sophists. The calculus is a mixture of Hippias' and Protagoras' art, but not Prodicus'. Prodicus' musical skill is needed to parse the words which have been used to stand in for the soul in Socrates' presentation of the calculus. Pleasure is not a uniform concept or experience. The pleasures of eating are different from those gained in winning a contest and any fully developed account of virtue must account for these differences.

Next, all the Sophists agree that all actions which are aimed at living pleasantly and painlessly are noble, and therefore good and beneficial. They also agree that if the pleasant is good then "no one who either knows or believes that other things are better than those he is doing, things that are in his power, then does [these inferior things], when it is possible to do better" (358c). Nor on this account do they agree "that anything other than ignorance or this being stronger than oneself [can] be anything but wisdom" (358c). They also all agree that ignorance is "having false opinions and being deceived about matters of much importance" (358c). Finally, they all agree that it is against human nature to willingly go towards bad things or willingly go towards bad things in preference for good things or when compelled to choose between two evils that they would choose the greater over the lesser. In short, they all now agree with the wise that it is impossible that "any human willingly does shameful and bad things" (345d).

Lastly, before moving to Protagoras' account of courage, Socrates secures a varied agreement that dread and fear are an expectation of something bad. Protagoras and Hippias agree that both are an expectation of something bad, while Prodicus' believes it

is only true of dread and not fear. Without quibbling with Prodicus, Socrates asks whether anyone would willingly go towards something which he dreads if this was within his power. They all agree that this was not possible on the basis of their agreement.

2.8.1 Unity of Virtue V: Courage and Ignorance 359a -360e

Courage for Protagoras is what distinguishes men from mere human beings. Courage is rooted in a naturally given spiritedness (*thumos*) and cultivated by education. Socrates' hedonistic calculus has shown the sophists the implicit character of their understanding of cultivation. Socrates' next move is to show that courage too must be rooted in knowledge of what is properly feared. This question, what is properly feared, would give Protagoras, if not his students, the avenue to discover what is noble.

Socrates returns to Protagoras' statement that courage above all the virtues is different, because a man could be very impious, very unjust, very unrestrained, very ignorant yet courageous. Socrates then asked whether the courageous were bold, and Protagoras answered further that they were even impetuous. Protagoras agreed he had said this and Socrates' continues from those premises. Socrates shows through questioning that the courageous and the cowardly are not impetuous towards the same things. He asks whether the cowardly go towards emboldening things and the courageous go towards terrible things. Protagoras says that the many believe this, but Socrates refuses to allow this answer and instead asks whether Protagoras himself agrees. Protagoras does not agree based on what the wise men believe: no one would willingly go towards terrible things knowing they are terrible. It is thus established that all men go towards that which they believe is emboldening.

Protagoras, however, protests because this does not account for the fact that the courageous go towards different things, especially with regards to war. Socrates asks whether it is noble or shameful to go to war and upon Protagoras' agreement, Socrates reminds him that they have established that all noble actions are good. Protagoras says 'so it has always seemed to me' (359e). But on this agreement Socrates quickly demonstrates that if something is noble it is good and if good then pleasant. If this equation holds then Socrates quickly demonstrates that the cowardly are cowards because they are ignorant of what is shameful and therefore terrible. Socrates does not draw the conclusions of the argument as quickly as they have been presented here; instead he slowly walks through each syllogism until Protagoras even ceases to nod in answer to Socrates' questions and remains silent. At the beginning of the dialogue Socrates had to protest to the sophists to keep his speeches short because he had the propensity to weave out long speeches acting like a bronze vessel when struck; Socrates' dialectic has silenced him.

The keys to Socrates' argument in this section are the equations: noble=good=pleasant and shameful=bad=terrible (*deinos*). Socrates assumes, without demonstrating, the terrible is the same thing as the distressing. Socrates earlier, in discussing the Simonides poem, states that Prodicus many times had chastised Socrates when he misuses words such as terrible (*deinos*), which can mean both skilled and fearful. He especially chastises him when he says, for example, "Protagoras is a terribly clever man" (341a) because 'terribly' does not mean something good. Depending on the context of the word, it can also mean clever (see 312d-e and 326d). Socrates first three uses of the term are all meant to denote a kind of learning which the sophist teaches and the fourth use of the term in

the dialogue is used by Protagoras to mean precisely what Prodicus says the word means, something terrible in the sense of something bad or fearful (312d-e and 317b). However, Protagoras next use of the term at 326d is in line with Socrates first usage, to mean something clever. Socrates' use of the word would appear to be inconsistent. It may be that Socrates believes that Protagoras is terribly wise because his wisdom is nothing great or even potentially harmful. The ambiguity in the term sheds new light on the discussion.

By making Protagoras himself agree that no one willingly goes toward that which is terrible (*deinos*), Socrates is also indicating to Hippocrates, to say nothing of others present, that now that the worth of Protagoras' wisdom has been made clear, they would only follow him as they did at the beginning of the dialogue, if they were ignorant. Implicit in Socrates' and Protagoras' account of courage is also the outline of an even higher conception of courage. Socrates' last formulation to Protagoras, which on first blush appeared to be mere brow beating, is:

“Therefore wisdom of the things that are terrible and are not terrible is courage, whose opposite is the ignorance of those things?”

This statement interpreted, but substituting the other meaning of *deinos*, reads:

“Therefore wisdom of the things that are clever and are not clever is courage, whose opposite is the ignorance of those things”.

When Socrates first asks Hippocrates to define what Protagoras teaches, he answers “what else should we say, Socrates except that he knows how to make one clever at speaking” (312d). Socrates then tells Hippocrates that plainly he can make people clever

at speaking about those things of which he is knowledgeable. Socrates also says that “Protagoras is a cleverly wise man.” If it is manly virtue or courage which Protagoras especially teaches his students who are naturally good (324d), then it follows from their agreements that Protagoras teaches the men the difference between things that are clever and not clever. On Socrates’ and Protagoras’ agreed upon view, only the ignorant go towards things that are clever. If Hippocrates is right that Protagoras teaches men to become clever speakers he then teaches them the difference between the clever and the not clever and teaches them to go towards the clever. Since only the ignorant go towards the clever, Protagoras teaches his pupils to be ignorant.

2.8.2 Conclusion 360e – 362a

After Socrates makes his point abundantly clear, that Protagoras was ignorant about what he believed to be highest virtue, Protagoras accuses Socrates of loving to win (*philonikien*). Critias earlier accused Alcibiades of being a lover of victory (336e) because of his support of Socrates in the crisis of the dialogue. Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue was accused of being on the hunt for the ‘bloom’ of Alcibiades, which was soon interpreted to mean the beauty (*kalos*) of Alcibiades. The beauty of Alcibiades was forgotten because of the beauty (*kalos*) of Protagoras’ wisdom. The only person actually called a philosopher in the dialogue is Callias, though we know from the other dialogues that Socrates too is a lover of wisdom. Socrates, the lover of youth, wisdom and victory, implicitly accused Protagoras, in his interpretation of Simonides’ poem, of being a lover of honour in regards to wisdom (*philotimos* 343b) and a lover of censure or blame (*philomomos* or *philopsogos* 346). Protagoras shows himself to be a lover of honour in regards to wisdom in desiring to display his speech in front of the other

sophists (317c). He also is shown to be a lover of censure in his censure of both the ancient poets, including Simonides, as well as the sophist Hippias. At the beginning of the dialogue it is also implied that Protagoras has wisdom. As our examination of the dialogue attempts to demonstrate, Protagoras is also a lover of the noble (*kalos*). The philosopher and Sophist differ in many things, but they appear to share a love of the beautiful. What the philosopher and sophist find beautiful, however is different. While the sophist is a lover of honour in regards to wisdom, the philosopher is a lover of victory in regards to wisdom. What might appear as a love of victory in the sophist is actually a mix of a love of honour and a love of censure.

Socrates proves that his love of victory is for wisdom by answering Protagoras that he was not asking these things for the sake of nothing, but for the sake of investigating the things pertaining to virtue. On saying this Socrates brings to the fore what has already been foreshadowed in the text: Protagoras and Socrates have inverted their positions in regards to the teachability of virtue.

Socrates says that the state of their conversation is laughable because each of them is urging contradictions against themselves. While Socrates at first thought that virtue was not acquired by any human care, he is now arguing that virtue is knowledge, and it would be surprising if virtue was knowledge but not teachable. While Protagoras was at first arguing that virtue is teachable he is now denying that it is knowledge. And, as Socrates asks, how could virtue be teachable unless it was knowledge and therefore learnable? The seeming contradictions among their positions are dealt with in other dialogues. The argument that virtue is knowledge and not teachable, but learnable, is presented in the

Meno, while the possibility of correct opinion as it is presented in the *Republic* makes possible virtue without knowledge.¹⁵²

Observing that this state of affairs is terribly (*deinos*) confused, Socrates states his eagerness for them to become clear. The question which Socrates suggests as the correct starting point is not whether virtue is teachable, but what is virtue *per se*. If this question is not taken as primary Socrates argues that the Epimetheus (after-thought) will deceive them as he did when he neglected his distribution of natural powers. This comment returns to Protagoras' myth and argues that investigations into what is virtue ought not to be conducted as an after-thought to whether virtue is teachable. The reason, of course, is that answers to all the major questions will be assumed by one's assumptions about virtue in investigating its teachability. Protagoras believes he already knows what the virtues are and how they are acquired and under what conditions because he believes he already knows the virtues. This flaw in Protagoras' procedure is manifest in his investigation of the Simonides poem, where Protagoras wants to investigate whether it is easy or hard to be good. Socrates on the other hand attempts to pursue the question of whether one could actually *be* good or whether it is only possible to *become* good. Socrates' desire is to investigate the prior question of what exactly goodness consists, while Protagoras was satisfied that the many believe one could actually *be* good. The problem with Protagoras' method of deduction is that it is an after-thought because it can only proceed as if its assumptions are true. Socrates proposes to proceed dialectically because it is fore-thoughtful to the important question: what exactly is the virtue which one is acquiring?

¹⁵² *Republic of Plato*, 476a-480a.

Socrates, fore-thoughtful of this problem, states his preference for Prometheus over Epimetheus (361d).

This preference has multiple implications; I focus on three. The first is that it is only by asking the prior question that one properly takes concern for virtue. As Socrates states it, he makes use of Prometheus by “taking fore-thought for [his] entire life, [he is occupied with all these things]” (361d). As Protagoras is pleased with only being honoured for wisdom and Socrates is pleased with loving wisdom, so too they investigate the world differently. In short wisdom is an after-thought for Protagoras and it is Socrates’ constant fore-thought.

The second implication is that Socrates’ choice of forethought states his implicit preference for Protagoras’ understanding of art above his understanding of nature. While Protagoras clearly believes art to be superior to nature in the sense that art completes nature’s deficiencies, his actual position favours nature’s (or Epimetheus’) unequal distribution of powers. Protagoras is concerned with those who are good by nature and are capable of using their capacities to become notable in the city, because by being their teacher, he gains notoriety. The end (*telos*) of virtue for him is not pleasure, as he speaks in the name of the many, but honour. Though Protagoras presents his teaching in such a way so as to be safe, he wishes to be safe so he can enjoy being honoured (if not also being wealthy). The difference between the hedonistic calculus which aims at safety and Protagoras’ sophistry is that Protagoras’ safety is for the sake of being honoured for his wisdom; the many simply wish to be safe so as to minimize their pains and maximise their pleasures. On the surface, Protagoras denigrates nature in favour of art and convention. On closer analysis Protagoras actually praises nature and views convention

and art as the helpers of nature; especially of those who have good natures. The highest virtue is to be able to manipulate convention with art for the sake of one's own ambitious nature. In Protagoras' mind the honour he ought to receive from the many for his wisdom is not merely conventional, but must appear as a gift from the gods. Protagoras has discovered how to keep the ship of state afloat on the seas of trouble and for that reason they not only honour him, but are grateful. Protagoras appears as a Titan striving to benefit mankind.

If the hedonistic calculus that vice is not due to nature but to ignorance of measuring pains and pleasures is correct, then Protagoras can still gain his honour and gratitude from the many as useful. Provided that is, that they understand what he can contribute. What Protagoras' will not be able to receive is honour from the few because the implication of the hedonistic calculus is that statesmanship is training people to manage their pleasures and pains. The nobility, or perceived nobility, of great political enterprises, is lost. In short, statesmanship becomes herd management which is not noble because human beings are reduced to herd animals. Protagoras relies on Epimetheus' division of powers because this division separates the noble from the base, the few from the many. Though Socrates' position seems less democratic at the beginning of the conversation and Protagoras' more, these views too have inverted.

Protagoras does not wish to continue the conversation, but instead chooses to praise Socrates, not without a modicum of self-praise though. That Protagoras chooses to end the conversation with praise of Socrates, suggests that he understood Socrates' censure against him for loving censure. Protagoras praises Socrates for his enthusiasm (*prothumian*) and his conduct of the arguments. Then he provides a frank admission to

the audience that he does not believe he is a bad person and is least envious among human beings. That Protagoras still believes that envy is a vice suggest in itself that he is nobler than the hedonistic calculus which Socrates reduced his teaching to. It is useful at this point to distinguish clearly between the hedonistic calculus and Protagoras' teaching. To this point we have suggested that the hedonistic calculus is a more thorough presentation of what politics must be if Protagoras' assumptions are true. We know, however, that it does not incorporate one of Protagoras' explicit and more important assumptions: the distinction between the noble and the base.

Protagoras' politics is more than herd management because he views politics as the highest of human pursuits. To practice politics is to practice the art which Zeus himself so jealously guards. Politics is noble because expertise in politics distinguishes men from one another. It takes a rare nature and many of the virtues such as courage, moderation and prudence, to perform well. In other words it requires a complete human being, or in Protagoras' words, a complete man. To reduce statesmanship and politics to mere calculation about pleasures is to reduce politics to the virtue of moderation. Because the hedonistic calculus does not seem to do justice to Protagoras' position, it is worth considering what it does do if Protagoras' understood the full implication of it and its relationship to his teaching.

Socrates' assessment of Protagoras' view of politics as a whole can briefly characterised as follows. First, Protagoras' view of politics does not require a complete man, but only a partial man. This is the case because politics on his view only requires the appearances of some of the virtues, piety and justice for example. The root of his problem is Protagoras' double account of virtue. As outlined above Protagoras separates the virtues into those

necessary for rule and those necessary to be ruled. If these virtues cannot be understood as a unity, then self-rule is not possible. If Protagoras is incapable of teaching self-rule which incorporates all the virtues, then he is teaching tyranny. It is in this sense that Protagoras' teaching, for all its noble aspirations, is dangerous and degenerative. In the conclusion to this section I will return to this theme.

Returning to the text, Protagoras then proceeds to praise Socrates:

“And I have said to many, that of all those I have happened to meet, particularly for your own age, you are by far the one I most especially admire. And let me say that I should not wonder if you become famous among men for wisdom” (361e).¹⁵³

Protagoras, that lover of honour with regards to wisdom, correctly predicts part of the charge against Socrates from his earlier accusers: that he is a wise man. The above quote, the fact of Socrates' trial, Socrates' alliance with the Sophists in the dialogue, as well as the eunuch guarding the door to Callias house, together demonstrate that the many will never be able to distinguish the philosopher from the sophist nor, in fact, does the sophist make a distinction between the philosopher and the sophist. Only the philosophic make this distinction for it is a philosophic distinction. As Protagoras presents them, sophists are interested in and teach many clever things, Hippias about the things above and below the earth, Prodicus the musical skill of precisely defining words, and Protagoras good council in the city's business. The philosopher combines each of these powers to investigate virtue as such. The many will never know the difference and they can never become philosophic, so this is the birth of political philosophy. This entails more than merely thinking about politics or even thinking about politics and teaching it with due

¹⁵³ See 316b for Socrates judgment of Hippocrates that he is a match for those his age.

regards to politics, for Protagoras does both and he is not a philosopher. The *Protagoras* brings philosophy and sophistry closer together because in the dialogue the two are viewed from the perspective of the many, who cannot distinguish between truly noble and base pleasures. The many's distinction between noble and base pleasures can only be explored on the basis of pleasure or the absence of pain, which in the final analysis, Socrates interprets as safety. The many cannot distinguish between the noble and the base because they view knowledge as a tool: even the hedonistic calculus only defends knowledge as a means to safety. The sophist as teacher of this calculus can only make the distinction between the noble and the base on the basis of honour, which in the final analysis is the difference between the few and the many. What Socrates' arguments seem to demonstrate is that what is noble is noble because it is true. Wisdom is more noble than the young man's looks. Socrates ends his visit to Protagoras' house with the statement that he must be leaving and that he only stayed in the conversation to gratify the noble (*kalos*) Callias' love of wisdom.

2.9 Conclusion

The dialogue is unified as a kind of negotiation between various interests in the city (sophists, philosophers, the many, and the few). The end of this negotiation appears to create a consensus between the many, the sophists and philosophers which will make it safe for sophists and philosophers alike to live in the city. The compromise, on the surface, appears acceptable to the sophists and the philosophers. Socrates' unnamed comrade, who seems to represent the many, does not comment at the end of the dialogue, nor do the few who are present at the conversation. Building from the observations above, there is good reason to believe that this compromise will prove unacceptable to

the both the ambitious few and the conventional many. The reasons why this compromise is unacceptable are also the reasons why the Protagorean teaching is corrupting. What is implicitly left out indicates what would be required for a fully healthy political teaching, not just a teaching which only *appears* to be healthy.

We begin our conclusion by addressing the distinction in the Protagoras's teaching between the gentleman (*kalos k'agathos*) and the citizen (*polites*). Though Protagoras' teaching appears to teach deference to law, on closer examination, it teaches a kind of skilled pursuit of honour and mastery. The difference between the gentleman and the citizen, is the same as the difference between those capable of the virtues for rule and the rest who are merely capable of being ruled. Those who can neither rule nor be ruled are animals and do not belong to the city. In the case of the citizen, there is a clear guide to the good life: follow the laws. Citizens can be divided into two classes. Those who follow the law in earnest and those who realise they ought only to appear to follow the law. Of those who know they must only appear to follow the law, some are wealthy and possess good natures sufficient for possessing the virtues required for rule. These men are gentlemen because they possess both the natural and conventional gifts required to successfully pursue and wield political power. These gentlemen, at the helm of a city whose laws were founded by ancient wise men, practice the highest virtues (prudence, courage, and wisdom). In possession of the highest virtues, Protagoras assuredly believes that they will best be able to give counsel on the affairs of the city. He also believes that by possessing these virtues gentlemen could learn the political art and actually make good citizens. On the surface this would seem to follow from Protagoras' 'Great Speech'

in so far as it argues good citizens are made by simply learning the means to securing their obedience to the ancient laws.

There is evidence to believe that Protagoras may have something more in mind for statesmanship than the office of the chief of police. First, Protagoras himself framed laws for Thurioi, and so he surely thought himself capable of being a legislator. The fame which comes from founding is surely not far from Protagoras' mind as he explicitly argues to be the *first* to openly practice sophistry. Second, Protagoras himself admits the art of war is part of the political art. Next to founders, those capable of leading men successful in battle earn the greatest fame. It is perhaps these two more grandiose aspects of politics which appeal to Protagoras' students. For Protagoras and his pupils, the founding of cities and the waging of wars represent the highest and noblest aspirations of politics.

This is, in short, Protagoras' view of politics. The virtues are not good in themselves, but are good for their consequences. Justice and Moderation are the virtues of the simple citizens, while real men, the prudent and courageous, pursue the dangerous and glorious honours of politics. The friendship between the citizens of the city is a necessary ruse to moderate man's ill equipped and violent nature. The law makes men safe and civilizes them. To be able to legislate, or 'rule' of conventions, is the highest human pursuit. To be capable of ruling convention one must understand that the dictates of convention only require that one appear to follow convention. Justice and moderation are not meant to guide a gentleman's action in politics; rather courage and prudence are required. In short, politics is akin to a Promethean struggle to steal the highest honours from the ancient founders of law.

Socrates' questioning of this position was shown to be aimed at bringing out the tensions in Protagoras' double standard of virtue. The meaning of this question can be seen when we turn to see how the hedonistic calculus modifies Protagoras' view of politics. We begin by noting that the nobility of politics is destroyed in the hedonistic calculus. The pursuit of safety as the condition for pleasure seeking replaces the pursuit of the honour and glory of mastering cities and waging wars. The hedonistic calculus is bound to seem petty, slavish and even effeminate compared to the manly enterprises of founding cities and conducting wars. A higher conception of nobility than safety must be sought to restore politics or public life as a worthwhile pursuit. This is not because safety is undesirable but because danger is necessary to exercise the highest virtues.

Protagoras' teaching about politics is bound to seem more appealing than the politics of the hedonistic calculus. The problem for Protagoras lies in the fact that the principle of the hedonistic calculus, safety, is Protagoras' principle. He has hidden this core principle in the grand and sweeping rhetoric of his *mythos and logos*. It was his principle for determining how to present himself publicly and it was also the principle which seems to guide his double standard of virtue. The rulers must rule while remaining safe from the many. This requires deception. Socrates has attempted to show that Protagoras' view of politics is paltry because, though it appears to pursue the manly end of ruling, it really teaches a life of constantly calculating for one's safety. The hedonistic calculus attempts to show the limits of a life guided by Protagoras' teaching. There will be no glorying in the greatness and grandeur of one's political enterprises. Alcibiades and the rest desire to storm Olympus, not manage a herd of mere human beings concerned with their base desires.

The hedonistic calculus is first meant to show the base side of politics. Protagoras' myth makes it seem as if politics is akin to the striving of Prometheus for the kind of reverence and honour which the ancient lawgivers receive. However, the hedonistic calculus shows that the principles of Protagoras' politics are more akin to the ignoble life of Epimetheus. Recall in the myth that Prometheus must attempt his striving because of the defects of Epimetheus' work. Epimetheus was in charge of making the mortal species safe by providing for their needs for food, shelter, reproduction and defence. Protagoras' Prometheus commits his crimes for the basic needs of mankind. The truth about the end of Protagorean politics is that it is about the satisfaction and prudent management of these basic needs. This is why Socrates insists on associating Protagoras' view of politics with Epimetheus at the end of the dialogue, rather than Prometheus as the myth would suggest. Protagoras' view of politics cannot account for what his pupils take to be best in life, striving for honour, glory and mastery, in a way which doesn't make these ends seem base. What is missing is the nobility of the virtues themselves: the ground by which Protagoras' attempts to make his view of politics appealing the first place.

What is at stake can be best summed up in how the careers of Charmides, Critias, Callias and Alcibiades affected Athens. The silence of Protagoras suggests that perhaps Socrates' opinion at the beginning of the dialogue is correct, that it is not by any human care that the good become good. However, the fact that most of the ambitious youth stayed with the Sophists suggests that if it is by any care that the good become good it must be by the care the youths have for themselves. This care is only possible through shame. If the ambiguous conclusions which resulted from Socrates' exchange with Protagoras' did not sting them awake then it is dubious that they could be truly concerned for virtue.

Plato does not reveal how Socrates' unnamed comrade responded to Socrates' tale, which is to say we are left to discern what the many men of Athens might say. Would the men of Athens have been satisfied that their youths be taught a knowledge designed for them to pursue their pleasures? Is it not precisely the fear of the many that the best of their youth will pursue tyrannical aspirations for rule of the city? Is their concern not the hubris of their youth? With this in mind, chief among the questions of the conventional many would be how and in what way are the gods or the higher things to be integrated with the hedonistic calculus? As the compromise blocks off philosophic ascent, so too does it block any genuine piety. The hedonistic calculus is atheistic and thus a potentially hubristic calculus. Unlike the *Gorgias*, the *Apology* and the *Republic*, which all end with consideration of the after-life and justice, the *Protagoras* lets the 'Great Speech' with the caveat of Socrates' quest for the unity of virtue, stand as the only word on piety.¹⁵⁴ Given Socrates' statement that virtue must be thought through in the context of the entire span of one's life, both the myths of the *Gorgias* and *Republic* would prove good myths to hedge against the hubristic potential of the calculus. However, the absence of such a myth in the *Protagoras* shows the absence of the role of justice (and piety) in the hedonistic calculus and thus the compromise between the sophists, philosophers, the many and the few. An account of the after-life is chiefly aimed to show that justice has a cosmic ground. The hedonistic calculus thus only seems to educate the many in one of the three virtues required for rule, moderation. This suggests that perhaps moderation is the necessary condition of both piety and justice. It is therefore perhaps not accidental that the dialogue which follows the *Protagoras* chronologically is the *Charmides* and its chief

¹⁵⁴ See Eric Voeglin's account in *Order and History v. 2: The World of the Polits* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1956), pp 285-291. There he argues the hedonistic calculus is meant to connect the selfish life of the present with a consideration of man's place in the eternal.

subject of investigation is moderation. The implicit focus on moderation in the development of the hedonistic calculus at the end of the *Protagoras* is also meant to show what is most glaringly absent from his account of politics.

The absence of moderation in Protagoras' account of politics is strangely paralleled by the absence of *eros*. The *Protagoras* charts a thwarted ascent and dubious compromise and given the account above, and the many allusions to the *Symposium*, the cause of both is the absence of *eros*. As a whole *eros* is absent from the *Protagoras* and for this reason the discussants have trouble maintaining a friendly conversation. Friendship in the Platonic dialogues seems to be possible based on a compatibility of *eros*.¹⁵⁵ As a whole the dialogue is motivated more strongly by *thumos*. *Thumos* oriented towards victory, honour and mastery is, to say the least, politically dangerous and much of Platonic political philosophy is aimed at reorienting *thumos* to either civic virtue or philosophy.¹⁵⁶ Part of the reason for the lack of friendship in the discussion, about which Hippias and Prodicus' complain, is Protagoras' understanding of friendship. In his great speech Protagoras argues that it is convention that grounds friendship (322c). Placing the observations from the *Gorgias* and *Symposium* together with Protagoras' account of friendship suggests that the absence of friendship is directly linked to the absence of moderation and *eros*.

Protagoras never mentions *eros* as motivator of human beings but he does mention *thumos* as a source of manliness and the desire for revenge. Recall manliness or courage

¹⁵⁵ See for example the *Gorgias* when Socrates pleads for the friendship of Callicles based on their similar *eros*. See Newell, *Ruling Passion*, pp 12-39 and *Gorgias*, 481b-488b.

¹⁵⁶ This connection has been well documented in recent Platonic scholarship. See especially Newell's *Ruling Passion* and Leon H. Craig's *the War Lover*. See especially Newell's footnote number 7 to his introduction (p 6) for how Newell distinguishes their approaches regarding *thumos*, *eros* and philosophy.

is said to be unique among the virtues. The dialogue, though it promises an account of the knowledge of the doctor of the soul, does not consider the soul itself. Protagoras' divides human-being into capacities for nature, art and convention. Nature represents basic bodily desire as is clear by Epimetheus' division of capacities: desire for food, defence, sex and shelter. Convention represents *thumos*, as *thumos* with *dike* grounds the conventional virtues of justice and courage as well as Protagoras' desire for honour. Lastly, *techne* stands for *eros* and *episteme*. Prometheus steals the arts which Athena and Hephaestus practice (*epilotechneiten*) and it is this theft from the gods which awakens man's sense of the gods. The desire for transcendence buried in *eros* is presented in the *Protagoras* as a hubristic appraisal of technical power. This last fact is demonstrated by the hedonistic calculus itself. The calculus uses the most precise definition of knowledge (arithmetic) as the standard for an art (*techne*) of living well. The implication is that political life can be reduced to the necessities of mathematics. This, of course, is only possible if the erotic necessities can be reduced to the mathematical necessities. The transposition of *eros* to *techne* is meant to show the political limitations of those who practice the arts (*epilotechneiten*), especially those who believe that the practice of politics is reducible to an art. As Socrates suggests at the beginning of the dialogue, the arts themselves must be learned for the sake of an education proper to a private and free man (312a-b). It is this liberating education which ought to guide a man in public life, not the desire to master political life as a sculptor masters stone.

The deference of art and convention to nature suggests an interesting possibility relative to the account of the soul in the *Republic* which I have been using to demonstrate the limitations of the *Protagoras*' account of politics. If art is equated with reason, and

convention with spirit and nature, it would appear that Protagoras is arguing for a configuration of soul similar to that of the *Republic*. The reasoning part of the soul (art) uses spirit (convention) to rule the desires (nature) so as to bring forth the virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. This organization of the soul makes good citizens which in turn make the city possible. However, on closer inspection it is convention and art which are guided by the needs of nature and therefore represent the ruling element of the Protagorean soul. Reinterpreted, in the Protagorean soul it is nature (the desires) in alliance with art (reason) which guides convention (*thumos*). The necessity of convention was suggested to human being by art for the sake of remaining safe. The Protagorean natural soul, if not the *kalos k'agathos*, will not adopt convention as second nature as the many citizens do in their observance of justice, moderation and piety. Rather, a human being who desires to be a real man and notable in the city will allow his *thumos* (conventions) to be nurtured by reason (art) (351a-b). In short, Protagoras' *kalos k'agathos* is a tyrant in spite of, or rather, because of, his efforts at defending conventional morality.

In the *Republic* political power and philosophy can coincide through philosophy's study of the good itself. Civic virtue in the *Republic* is possible through a politicized version of *eros*, and *thumos*. Although Protagoras' account of political life is appealing to spirited men, it does not for that reason satisfy *thumos* safely. Spirited men are attracted to the Protagorean view of politics because it is fundamentally a violent account. Success at politics requires the art of war and domestic tranquility must be established by threats and punishments designed to make men 'virtuous.' The noble vein which rests in Protagoras' account of politics lies in his distinction between noble and base pleasures. Protagoras is

ultimately defeated by Socrates because he cannot account for why some pleasures are truly noble and some truly base. The *Protagoras*, though driven by *thumos*, presents the possibility for civic virtue absent *thumos*. Without *thumos* there is no way to distinguish between the necessary and the unnecessary pleasures, the noble and base pleasures, nor the mathematical necessities and the erotic necessities. The lack of these three distinctions in the soul makes possible a hubristic desire to master one's fellow man with the precision of a *techne* in the pursuit of one's basest desires. This is tyranny. The Sophists do not take into consideration the psychological depth of human beings. The hedonistic calculus is an abstraction from full human nature because the satisfactions of *thumos* or *eros* are given equal measure with bodily satisfactions. A desire for justice is counted as equal with a desire for food or sex. This is a product of reducing politics to safety.

On a deeper level, the deficiency of Protagoras' account lies in his belief in the manifold character of the good. If the good is manifold there is no order to the good for human beings and there is no basis by which to establish a political psychology. If the desires of *thumos* are not higher than the desire for food, there is only ground for a narrow political psychology which would not be able to account for the distinction between noble and base pleasures. This deeper vein of Protagoras' teaching is explored in the *Theaetetus* where Socrates and Theodorus and Theaetetus search for a coherent interpretation of Protagoras' 'man is the measure' aphorism. Of central importance in that discussion is how Protagoras would integrate the concept of good into his metaphysics. On the whole, however, for our purposes it is important to note that a political psychology like the one presented in the *Republic* is impossible for Protagoras.

Once we are faced with Protagoras' relativism we are tempted to immediately ask about the status of his political art. Socrates' description of the sophist as a doctor of the soul at the beginning of the *Protagoras* suggests that Protagoras' could be compared to the extended analogy between the arts which care for the body and the arts which care for the soul in the *Gorgias*. For each art which cares for the body there is a knack which appears to make the body healthier and so too with the arts pertaining to the soul. The art of justice is to rhetoric what medicine is to pastry baking. Similarly the art of legislation is to sophistry what gymnastics is to cosmetics. The sophistic side of the analogy is barely discussed in the *Gorgias* though Socrates chides Callicles for neglecting sophistry (*Gorgias*, 520a-c), arguing that sophistry is more noble than rhetoric as legislation is more noble than administering justice. The *Gorgias* relies heavily on the analogy between justice and medicine, and thus on the analogy to the physician. The *Protagoras* likewise focuses on the role of the physician without any attempt to distinguish the physician from the physical trainer in relation to the health of the soul (see *Protagoras*, 315d). It is puzzling from the perspective of the *Gorgias* why Socrates, in questioning a sophist, would be in pursuit of a doctor of the soul and not a trainer of the soul. One can begin to solve this confusion by noticing that while Socrates compares himself to a doctor (352a-b), he compares Protagoras to a runner, wrestler and a boxer. From the perspective of the *Gorgias* what Protagoras teaches is neither nourishing nor satisfying for the soul but only appears to be satisfying. Protagoras' teaching confuses exercise and training for plastic surgery. Protagoras would require knowledge of justice to know what is satisfying for the soul. But justice is a mere convention to Protagoras, a necessary compromise with the many, and thus he guides his teaching by the desires of his students. Some like

Antimoiros may wish to become sophists, while others, like Callias, might wish to learn to become notable in the city's affairs. Protagoras, though expert at arguing and disputing, is not a true trainer of the soul, precisely because he lacks a psychology, and therefore when he sells his expertise it amounts to a merchant selling those things the worth of which he does not know.

What remains to be determined is whether the compromise which Socrates strikes with the Sophists improves this relationship between the sophists and their pupils. First, we have already demonstrated that the hedonistic calculus will not safely satisfy the most ambitious of Protagoras' students. If they believe that politics is as the calculus suggests it may be, then they will flee politics and pursue other ends, perhaps even philosophy; that is, if the *aporetic* ending of the dialogue stings them to philosophy. Second, notwithstanding the arguments above about the relationship of the hedonistic calculus to the many regarding the gods, the calculus will encourage the many to follow the law. The reason that the many will follow the law, amounts to the same reason as the one Protagoras gave about the role of law in his Great Speech; following the law is a good means to guarantee safety for the pursuit of one's pleasures. Protagoras the athlete can invite others to mimic his deference to custom and thereby teach by example the virtues he argues are required for the city to exist. In short, though the hedonistic calculus is atheistic, or at best agnostic, it is not therefore hubristic. It is only potentially hubristic. The hedonistic calculus does not train the soul but provides an argument for following convention which is both safe and satisfying. The hedonistic calculus is thus an improvement on Protagoras' teaching about convention. While Protagoras could only argue for the appearance of virtues, the calculus can account for why the virtues are

satisfying regardless of whether one appears to have them. The meaning of the impoverished state of this account is given above. What the calculus does is present the need for an account of political virtue which is both precise and satisfying. This account is attempted in the other Platonic dialogues.

I wish to conclude with a consideration of two more telling absences from the *Protagoras*. The first is the absence of Aristophanes. As I have argued above, Socrates' defence of his pursuit of philosophy is implicit in his description of Callias' House as the kingdom of the dead. As shown in the *Apology*, Aristophanes' comic portrait of Socrates served as one of Socrates' first accusers and teachers to those who instigated his arrest and trial.¹⁵⁷ That all the speakers of the *Symposium* are present in the *Protagoras* save Aristophanes seems to suggest that Aristophanes, for all the antagonism between Socrates and Aristophanes, properly belongs among Socrates' friends. The grim and mercenary setting of the *Protagoras* could not provide a starker contrast with the light mood of Plato's *Symposium* or Aristophanes' plays. As life is both tragic and comic, Aristophanes' absence underlines the limits of the *Protagoras*. One need only imagine how Aristophanes' vulgar comedy might mock the hedonistic calculus to intuit these limits.

Perhaps more interesting are the parallels between Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* and Protagoras' 'great speech'. Both accounts place an act of hubris at the origins of mankind. In the case of Plato's Aristophanes, human beings in their original natures attempted an assault on the heavens, for which Zeus' punished them by splitting them into two. As whole human nature is hubristic, but as a divided nature the *eros* of

¹⁵⁷ *Apology of Socrates*, 19c.

human beings is focused on the pursuit of their lost half. The threat that Zeus may further divide human nature is what Aristophanes suggests ought to compel men to give proper reverence for the gods. The cause of political ambition on Aristophanes' account stems from natures which are wholly male as they must be 'bold, brave and masculine' to pursue politics (*Symposium*, 192a). The similarity between Protagoras and Aristophanes is that both men agree that a masculine, courageous, nature is required for politics. The difference between the two is that Protagoras' links the hubris of men to their technical power while Aristophanes links hubris to a satisfied or whole *eros*. Protagoras can account for the need for politics due to the deficiencies of human nature but cannot account for reproduction or the family as satisfying a human need. He would perhaps agree with Aristophanes that some only reproduce because of convention.¹⁵⁸ The problem with Aristophanes' speech is that it reduces all desire to *eros* and does not account for the multiplicity of desires, such as the desire for honour, victory or wisdom. The problem with Protagoras' is that he accounts for nothing in terms of desire except as the practice of the arts (*epilotechneitên*). An account based on *techne* can only account for satisfying need but sheds little light on understanding need. Aristophanes' and Protagoras' accounts complete one another: the one aims to understand need, the other to satisfy need. This best sums up what is missing regarding psychology from the *Protagoras*¹⁵⁹

Lastly, and perhaps appropriately I wish to comment on the *Protagoras*' gentle mocking of Prodicus' musical and even divine skill of making precise distinctions. The most striking is during Socrates' failed alliance with Prodicus when Prodicus interprets the word hard (*chaleron*) to mean bad (*kakon*). Perhaps just as striking is Prodicus'

¹⁵⁸ *Symposium*, 192b.

¹⁵⁹ For a discussion of how the *Protagoras* relates to Aristophanes. See Goldberg, *Commentary*, conclusion.

distinguishing dread (*deos*) as an expectation of evil (*kakou*) but not fear (*phobos*) (358d). Socrates earlier even asks Prodicus to spare Socrates his distinctions when he asks about whether the good (*agathon*) is the same as pleasure (*hedu*) and the bad (*kakon*) the same as the painful (*aniaron*) (358c). Prodicus' art is thus neglected during the construction of the hedonistic calculus and the final compromise. Even though Prodicus' consents to the calculus, in the end it is a synthesis of Protagoras' political teaching with Hippias' concern for the natural science. The absence of the power of Prodicus' musical art would never have allowed the equation of the good with pleasant and the noble. All the distinctions which I have pointed to as significantly absent appear to be key to understanding and evaluating Protagoras' political teaching. Prodicus' seven distinctions displayed in his contribution to ending the crisis (in common (*koinous*)/equal, wiser/less learned (*amathesterôî*), dispute/quarrel, friends/enemies, praise/esteem, pleased/delighted and body/soul) would have gone a long way to sorting out the dysfunctional quarrel and bringing friendship and harmony of purpose to their dispute.

Though Prodicus' divine and musical skill would have surely enriched the discussion Socrates only ever claims to have taken the cheap course in Prodicus' art.¹⁶⁰ The reason for this seems to be demonstrated amply by Prodicus' contributions to the dialogue. Precise distinctions made in speech are only useful if they reflect actual distinctions. Though it is safe to say most synonyms reflect actual distinctions, pursuit of excessive precision can cripple a discussion with semantics. More to the point, as is reflected in Socrates rebuke of Prodicus' art, there is no point in making distinctions which are not directly relevant to the discussion. This use of Prodicus' art is simply another trick used

¹⁶⁰ See *Cratylus* cited above. See Craig, *War Lover*, pp 46-57 for his account of the use of words as "tracks for the ideas" in the *Republic of Plato*.

by the Sophists, as with Protagoras' long speeches, to distract from a clear and focused investigation. The proper employment of this musical art is being able to make correct and relevant distinctions. Distinctions which cut at the joints as it were.¹⁶¹

In this spirit I return to Socrates' first reference to Prodicus' skill. Socrates tells Protagoras that Prodicus' often chastises him about the difference between the clever (*deinos*) and the wise (*sophon*). Socrates often calls people terribly (*deinos*) wise for which Prodicus' chastises him for implying that wisdom is something bad. The difference between the sophist and the philosopher in regards to wisdom becomes clearer. The philosopher is satisfied to save the reputation of philosophy while the sophist is satisfied to gain a reputation for wisdom by appearing clever.

Because of the absurdity of the hedonistic calculus it is safe to say that the *Protagoras* is a philosophical comedy, though it may well be a political tragedy.¹⁶² In fact my argument could be justly summed up by saying that it is a political tragedy because it is a philosophic comedy. The philosopher is unable to produce a satisfactory account of political virtue while in dialogue with the sophists and so he attempts to humiliate them and their practice by getting them to agree to a ridiculous account. This inability of philosophy to seduce sophistry into an investigation into the question of virtue is mirrored by the inability of Athens and her sophists to teach their youth moderation.

The *Protagoras* demonstrates that the sophist cannot account for politics in such a way so as to defend virtue for itself. More than this, the sophist's political teaching is

¹⁶¹ *Phaedrus*, 265d-266b.

¹⁶² See Goldberg, *Commentary*, conclusion again where as an extension of his account of Aristophanes he makes the case for reading the *Protagoras* as a philosophical comedy.

dangerously susceptible to cultivating hubristic political ambition in his more talented pupils. If a youth is interested in politics for the honour and mastery evident in founding cities fighting wars and ruling over people, the sophist's political teaching provides him with the justification necessary to immoderately pursue these goals. Protagoras is aware that sophistry may appear dangerous to the many and believes he can protect sophists, as well as his pupils. Protagoras' protective pedagogical approach in general is grounded in giving lip service to piety as a way of moderating his students. If his students dislike his teaching they may provide a donation at a temple. His Great Speech seems to give piety a prime role in human affairs when he argues that it is the first virtue which human beings acquired. Though this may guard against outsiders seeing the hubristic potential of his teaching, it does not guard his students. If students enjoy his teaching they pay him and learn from him to become "better and better" each day. As I have tried to show, the height of Protagoras' teaching appears to be in mastering the art of legislation, in founding cities and waging war. Nothing in Protagoras' teaching grounds these arts in justice or moderation and thus Protagoras shows his pupils the way to tyranny and empire. This side of Protagoras' teaching provides his students with the justification for hubristic ambition and disregard for genuine civic virtue, which contributes to political degeneration. Socrates' description of the Callias' House as Hades and the presence of the likes of Callias, Critias, Charmides, and Alcibiades suggest that it is the teachings of the sophist which corrupted Athens and brought about her fall.

Many of the footnotes and this conclusion have laboured to show how the Protagoras is integrated with dialogues such as the *Gorgias*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Apology* but also others such as *Greater Hippias*, *Cratylus*, *Laws*, *Phaedrus*, *Theages*, and *Euthyphro*

¹⁶³. I would thus like to conclude with a brief consideration of what the *Protagoras* itself adds to the understanding of Platonic political philosophy.

A surprising amount is implied about political philosophy in the dialogue, especially as it concerns esoteric versus exoteric speeches and their political versus private effects. First, because philosophy prefers dialogue, it prefers private conversation to public displays. Private conversations allow the speakers a degree of frankness not possible in public speech and therefore allow more earnest speeches about the most important things. The private conversation conducted by question and answer also forces both of the interlocutors to take ownership of the arguments. In this way argument is taken more seriously, and if taken more seriously there will be less inclination to use sophistry in an attempt to win the argument. Though private conversation does not guarantee philosophic discussion it does provide for its possibility.

Second, this form of secret or more private association also hides philosophy more effectively from public persecution. While Socrates was eventually charged by the Athenians it was not until he was seventy. Plato, in disagreeing with Socrates over writing, appears to have found a way closer to Socrates' secretive Spartan wise men to preserve philosophy. This seems to be what Plato learned from the sophists and poets and it has been followed as a relatively safe way to encourage philosophy throughout the western tradition in political philosophy.

Third, the dialogue teaches that political philosophy can moderate politics. The famous Socratic maxims, knowledge is virtue, vice is ignorance and is only done involuntarily,

¹⁶³ See Appendix 2.

promote the virtue of education and moderate the desire for revenge. If injustice is involuntary then, as Socrates argues in the *Gorgias*, the laws governing crime and punishment should be thought of as medicine. And the Hippocratic oath is to do good and refrain from harm. In short, political philosophy humanizes politics.

With these points we can turn to the arguments of the *Protagoras*. The subjects the *Protagoras* covers are almost as wide ranging as those of the *Republic*, which is the most elaborate treatment of philosophy. It can be inferred from the arguments given above and from these facts that the *Protagoras* is important for its synoptic outlook. The subject of the dialogue, political decay or the threat of political decay, demands a synoptic account. Part of the reason we find the hedonistic calculus unsatisfying as a consideration of the problem of virtue and vice is that we intuit the need to bring everything important in human life to bear on this question. That the hedonistic calculus cannot distinguish between noble and base pleasures is the most obvious of its deficiencies because this distinction is important in guiding how we live our lives. Hippocrates' urgent arrival at Socrates' house, not to mention the throng of youth at Callias' House, demonstrate in dramatic detail the activity which this need sparks. Hippocrates' desire to become civic-spirited and notable in the city shows the question of the good-life is inevitably a political question. A rare answer to the pursuit of the good life is philosophy. That none of the twenty or so named characters of the *Protagoras* ascend to philosophy as a way of life demonstrates the rarity of the type. All the best of the thinkers in the past, Simonides, Homer, Heraclitus, Empedocle, *etc*, have judged that there is sufficient ground in the world by which one can orient oneself in the world. All is becoming, nothing is. The *Protagoras* in conjunction with the *Theaetetus*, is Plato's most thorough presentation of

the politics which flow from this view which is based on the primordial ontology.¹⁶⁴ Protagoras as a figure seems to represent in Plato's mind the best which the sophists and poets have been able to accomplish in accounting for political life. Protagoras strives to be responsible. It accounts for the need for justice, piety, moderation, and courage to defend and even fight for one's city. It accounts for much of how many people actually behave and provides good reasons based on self-interest for doing so. The problem is that it cannot convince the most dangerous to act responsibly. The problem is that the best that has been accomplished only defends the appearance of virtue. The battle between Parmenides and Socrates on the one hand and 'the Motion Men' on the other is best summed up by Socrates.

"If then our acting well were to consist in this, in our grasping and acting in accord with the great distances and avoiding small distances and not acting in accord with them, what means of saving our life would have come to sight? The art of measurement or the power of appearances? Or wouldn't this latter cause us, as we saw, to wander about and change our minds back and forth many times about the same things and go back on our decision when it comes to both our actions and our choosing things that are great and small? Wouldn't the art of measuring, on the other hand, have rendered this apparition powerless and, by having made clear the truth, would it not have set our soul at peace, fixed by the truth, and have saved our life? Would the people agree, in light of these things, that it is the measuring art that saves us, or another one?" (356d).

¹⁶⁴ Cropsey in *Plato's World* sums up the relationship between the two dialogues as follows: "Plato's sifting of Protagoras runs through *Protagoras* and *Theaetetus*, the former dialogue addressing the climatic question of the coming to be of good and evil among men, the latter the companion question, What is Knowledge," p 3.

3 **Francis Bacon and The Re-founding of the Regime of the Sciences**

3.1 **Introduction**

The *Great Instauration* and the *New Organon* are as much an account of the history of philosophy as they are a path to a new philosophy.¹⁶⁵ In order to open the way to a new philosophy, the deficiency of the old philosophy must be explained. As Plato's Socrates' challenged the sophists in order to establish the superiority of Platonic philosophy, Bacon shows the deficiency of the Greek and medieval tradition in order to establish the superiority of his active science.

¹⁶⁵ See Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes and Nietzsche* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp 116-123.

Some of the formal aspects of Bacon's approach to the critique of the ancient philosophy are modeled on Socrates' critique of ancient sophistry in the *Protagoras* and other dialogues. This is not to say that they are identical, only that they are similar in structure. Both Socrates and Bacon attempt to find a conventional authority for their novel approaches through a spurious appeal to an esoteric or almost forgotten tradition. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates' appeal is to the authority of the seven wise men of Greece and a fantastical account of the role of sophists in Sparta; Bacon's appeal is to the lost writings of ancient pre-Socratics, which appear to us now only as fables and a fantastical account of the Island of Atlantis. Politically, Socrates' and Bacon's approaches have the effect of making the status-quo seem as if it were a deficient or misguided revolution and suggesting that a return or restoration is required.

Moving past the formal similarities in their presentations, we see that great differences appear. Socrates' appeal to this ancient authority was to show that all wise men agree that it is impossible to teach virtue to counter Protagoras's claim that he is able to teach virtue. However, as Socrates attempts to overcome the sophists in argument, the possibility is left open through the hedonistic calculus, that Socrates and the wise are incorrect and that it may be possible to teach a kind of virtue. Because the Sophists do not wish to continue to learn what virtue and knowledge are, the pursuit is left to be picked up by others and is picked up by Socrates in dialogues such as the *Meno* and *Republic*. The attack on the conventional approach from the perspective of a fictional ancient

authority allowed Plato's Socrates to introduce the novel and superior Platonic political philosophy.¹⁶⁶

Bacon challenges the received tradition in the name of restoring natural philosophy to its proper place as the great mother of the sciences (NO, LXXIX).¹⁶⁷ He argues consistently that his project is novel and that it has a basis in a lost tradition, about which he has, quite mysteriously, gained special knowledge. Many scholars in the tradition to which this thesis aims to contribute, agree that the *New Atlantis* and the *Wisdom of the Ancients* contain some of Bacon's most important thoughts about the political implications of his project.¹⁶⁸ The importance of Platonic political philosophy for understanding those Baconian texts has been well established.¹⁶⁹ Though Bacon's project is, at a minimum, a response or modification of the ancients, it is also most certainly novel and contemporary and cannot be reduced to classical political philosophy. My view is that commentators tend to make a number of overestimations or errors when evaluating Bacon's political philosophy and philosophy of science. The first error is that many commentators assume

¹⁶⁶ This strategy is not only present in the *Protagoras* but in many of the Platonic dialogues. In a way all of the dialogues are radically fictitious and are in themselves testaments to an authority which never actually existed, or, more accurately, to a beautified version of that authority. But putting this aside, many Platonic characters use fables in their arguments, such as the myth of Rhadamanthus from the *Gorgias* (523a-527e), the myth of the metals and the myth of Er from *Republic* (414b-417a and 614b-621d), not to mention most of the characters from the *Symposium* (most of whom are present in the *Protagoras*). References to fables are also persistent throughout Bacon's works, including *New Organon*, the *Essays*, the *Advancement of Learning*, *De Augmentis* and, of course, the *New Atlantis* and the *Wisdom of the Ancients*. The preface to the *Wisdom of the Ancients* contains Bacon's assessment of the use of fable. Laurence Berns, "Francis Bacon and the Conquest of Nature," *Interpretation* 7/1 (January, 1978): 1-26.

¹⁶⁷ Unless otherwise stated the Latin numerals put in quotations refer to the aphorism number from Book 1 of the *New Organon*. They will be cited in the following form: (NO, XXX). Similarly the *Great Instauration* will be cited as: (GI, p X). I will be using the Fulton Anderson edition for both works. Francis Bacon, *New Organon and Related Writings*. Edited with an introduction by Fulton Anderson. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1960).

¹⁶⁸ See Lampert, *Modern Times*, pp 21-26; Howard White, *Peace Among the Willows; The Political Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, (The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1968), p 15; Berns, 'Conquest of Nature,' pp 15-22.

¹⁶⁹ See for example, Lampert, *Modern Times*, pp 116-141; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* v3. (Publisher New York, Humanities Press., 1955), pp 170-188 (almost all of Hegel's discussion is in terms of Bacon's concept of Form); White, *Peace Among the Willows*, pp 105-134.

that Bacon believes that the experimental method which aims to gain power over nature is the highest form of knowledge, making classical philosophy look ridiculous or childish. The *New Atlantis* and the *Wisdom of the Ancients* are clearly not derived from his method, understood as empirical science, and yet they have proven to be invaluable works for understanding the meaning of his method. It is in Bacon as philosopher, not as ‘son of science,’ that the meaning of Baconian science comes to light. It may be that the *Wisdom of the Ancients and the New Atlantis* are ‘provisional works’ which, much like the last fifteen aphorisms of *New Organon*, are an offer “by way of interest (so to speak), till the thing itself, which is the principal, be fully known” (NO, CXV). The principle, of course being the new philosophy or active science, as it would illuminate ethics and politics. Bacon does after all make it clear that he means for his method of induction to be no less applied to these sciences as to the others (NO, CXXVII). For example, regarding the subjects of politics and ethics, he believes that histories should be compiled of “anger, shame, fear and the like.”

With this said, however, Bacon affirms that he

“supplies the mind with such rules and guidance that it may in every case apply aptly to the nature of things. And I therefore deliver many and diverse precepts in the doctrine of interpretation, which in some measure modify the method of invention according to the quality and condition of the subject of inquiry” (NO, CXXVII).

Given Bacon’s recommendation that this experimental science could contribute something to politics through a study of the passions, one wonders whether something like his essay, *Of Anger* would be closer to what he had in mind than the products of modern psychology departments. Bacon’s doctrine of interpretation and true induction does not treat each subject matter identically, though he is adamant that it can treat all

subject matters. One wonders what inventions a true knowledge of politics or ethics could produce? What fruits could be drawn from the ideas and axioms discovered?¹⁷⁰

I wish to argue that Bacon must have preserved something of Ancient philosophy, for it does not seem to take the dogmatic perspective implied by his scientific method. Scholars have, to my mind, successfully argued that Bacon is more a philosopher than scientific ideologue. The question becomes, how and where does this wider perspective fit into this project, which is clearly meant to be dogmatic? In a way, this is already demonstrated in the much discussed *New Atlantis*, in its description of the various ranks of natural philosophers. The scientist-sovereigns must use a standard not available to the lower echelons of science to determine whether an invention is acceptable for public use. It is well documented that Bacon left clues that his political thoughts would not be recorded openly.¹⁷¹ Some of Bacon's commentators, even those who recognize that his political thought is hidden, do not attempt to characterise the relationship of his political thought to his method. Most commentators who have recently turned to the *New Atlantis* and others works return to Bacon's political philosophy to better understand the deficiencies of modern times.¹⁷² They recognize that Bacon understands the limitations of his project, but it has not been clearly outlined from what ground he recognizes those limitations. Most commentators agree those limitations are shown in his more poetic and fabulous

¹⁷⁰ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Translated by Cress, Donald A. with introduction by Gay, Peter: *The Basic Political Writings*. (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 33-36.

¹⁷¹ See Lampert, Modern Times, 21-26 and Heidi Studer, "'Cross your Heart and Hope to Die?' Francis Bacon on Making and Breaking Promises," Interpretation 28/1 (Fall 2000): 3- 15, pp 4-6.

¹⁷² Heidi Studer, "Francis Bacon on the Political Dangers of Scientific Progress" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Jun., 1998): 219-234; Robert K. Faulkner, *Francis Bacon and the Project of Progress*. (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1993); John E Leary, *Francis Bacon and the Politics of Science* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994); Howard B White, *Peace Among the Willows*.

works and I will argue that what these works preserve is the traditional role of philosophy.¹⁷³

I will argue that this ground becomes a little clearer through a study of the *New Organon*, which is arguably Bacon's most polemical work that advocates the scientific method. As will be clearer in my discussion, this is not meant, by any means, to downplay the importance of Bacon's other works for thinking through the political importance of an active science. On the contrary, I indicate throughout this section that the *New Organon* itself points to the importance of works such as the *Advancement of Learning*, the *New Atlantis* and the *Wisdom of the Ancients*. As Studer cites in footnote 2 in her article 'Francis Bacon and the Dangers of Scientific Progress,' the *Wisdom of the Ancients* is understood by Bacon to immediately precede the *Advancement of Learning* and the *New Organon*, as if it were the proper preparatory work for understanding his method. I will, in essence, be arguing that the need for this perspective is in the *New Organon* and that there is room left in Bacon's critique of the ancients to see how this perspective is to be preserved, as it appears to be required in the *New Atlantis*.

3.2 F. Bacon and the Philosophic Tradition

In the Proem to the *Great Instauration*, which is Bacon's defence for publishing his project to establish an active science, he states that because he is convinced that the mind makes its own difficulties in understanding nature: "he [Bacon] thought all trial should be made, whether that commerce between the mind of man and the nature of things, which

¹⁷³ For example, White in *Peace Among the willows* argues that Bacon's political philosophy is importantly manifest in his *New Atlantis*, but takes it as granted that there is no tension between philosophy and science in Bacon's mind (p 15).

is more precious than anything on earth, or at least than anything that is of the earth, might by any means be *restored to its perfect and original condition*, or if that may not be, yet *reduced to a better condition than that in which it now is*" (emphasis added). Bacon says of his proposals to the King: "Certainly they are quite new, totally new in their very kind: and yet they are copied from a very ancient model, even the world itself and the nature of things and of the mind."

Though he titles his work the *Great Instauration*, it is also intended to be understood as a Great Restoration. However, one immediately wonders whether it is true that his project restores philosophy to "its perfect and original condition" for Bacon himself claims his work to be new, totally new. It seems more likely that he intends to reduce the current science "to a better condition than that in which it now is". For his own work, especially the *Great Instauration*, makes a great effort to demonstrate the insufficiency of all ancient science.

Bacon is persistent in the presentation of his project in asserting that there were philosophers in the past that more closely practiced what Bacon now preaches. This persistence, especially in his *New Atlantis* and his *Wisdom of the Ancients*, shows that this is not an accidental feature of his work and it shows that this is not incidental to the *Great Instauration* and the *New Organon*, but is an integral part of his teaching. The question then becomes, why? Why does Bacon maintain the claim that his teaching is grounded in a lost ancient Greek tradition? On the surface, as implied in the contrast with the *Protagoras* given above, by making the claim, Bacon may be attempting to give his *New Organon* credibility among those who venerate tradition. However, with anyone familiar with the tradition, Bacon's claim appears absurd, which raises the question again, why?

Why does Bacon persistently present his teaching as a restoration of long lost forgotten tradition when it seems clear that it is not intended as such?¹⁷⁴ This becomes doubly puzzling if his audience are those that venerate tradition, when he cites as one of the Idols of the Cave both “an extreme admiration for antiquity” and “an extreme love and appetite for novelty.” (NO, LVI). There Bacon argues that it is rare that a mind can hold the mean between the two “neither carping at what has been laid down well by the ancients, nor despising what is well introduced in the moderns” (NO, LVI). What is required is that “these factions...be abjured.” That Bacon’s works appeals to both extremes is evident from their titles, the *Wisdom of the Ancients* on the one hand and the *New Organon* and *New Atlantis* on the other; this suggests Bacon does not want a complete break with the ancients, but a modification or correction.

Regarding Bacon’s indictment against a veneration of the Ancients, how can it be that a dedication to the founders of philosophy be prejudicial to philosophy? This would certainly appear to be an indictment against the very approach of this dissertation. From a philosophical point of view, Bacon is absolutely correct. The truth is not dependent on the age of the authority which espouses it. It is fallacious, without further investigation and demonstration, to believe that the ancients are superior to the moderns. Similarly, as Bacon’s Idols demonstrate, it is also fallacious to believe that the truth can be discovered solely by reading books. One can, however, check one’s reading of the inherited past with due consideration of one’s experience of the present.¹⁷⁵ Or as Hobbes’ counsels, to ready thy self when reading books and compare what one reads in books to what one

¹⁷⁴ Outside the context of the *New Organon* the preface to the *Wisdom of the Ancients* is useful in this matter where Bacon argues about the easily abused tradition of interpreting fables.

¹⁷⁵ Preface to Machiavelli’s *Prince* p 3-4.

reads in oneself.¹⁷⁶ We are counselled, in our reading, to guard against being deceived and unwittingly worshipping false idols.

What part of the received tradition has been laid down correctly and what correction is to be affected?

Regarding the first, Bacon shares Machiavelli's criticism of ancients. As Machiavelli argues in chapter 15 of his *Prince*, the ancient teachings, though fine as products of thought, were disastrous, if not totally inappropriate, as guides to successful rule in politics; Bacon, as will be soon clear, perhaps more radically, criticises the ancients for the general uselessness of all their knowledge. It is clear that by ancient philosophy Bacon means ancient Greek philosophy, starting with the thinkers of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. Ancient philosophy does not have its origin in Christian times. Bacon himself argues that "for the most part" the philosophy which the Western Europeans (NO, LXXVIII) inherited is Greek philosophy (NO, LXXI). But Bacon is also clear that he does not wish to restore ancient Greek philosophy. In fact, he argues that there is too much veneration of all received knowledge such that the current state of knowledge proves the truth of the aphorism that "opinion of store is one of the chief causes of want" (GI, preface, p 7). He is also clear from the beginning that the "philosophy principally inherited from the Greeks is the boyhood of knowledge, and characteristic property of boys, it can talk but cannot generate." Since Bacon wishes to advance the condition of learning and initiate an 'active' science capable of works, it is clear that there is a great difference between his science and Greek philosophy (NO, XXIV).

¹⁷⁶ Introduction to Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: with selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*, edited with introduction and notes by Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994).

Judging from the title of the *New Organon*, we are lead to believe that Bacon's main object of attack against the Greek tradition is Aristotle's Organon. The Organon or Tool, is a group of seven of Aristotle's treatises, which were not collected as such by Aristotle, but by later thinkers who inherited his work. This is an important distinction. For Bacon is attempting to make new, not, at least primarily, something which Aristotle himself intended, but something which the tradition developed from Aristotle. This is important because Bacon is concerned with how learning persists and is passed down over time, from generation to generation and age to age. This concern is as much political as it is philosophical. It is not only a concern with the state of knowledge itself, but with how the student of philosophy approaches and learns from the tradition. On reflection, this is absolutely necessary in any account of philosophy worth considering. It is after all men and not gods who practice philosophy and all new students of philosophy must deal with that which they inherited from their early education. Their failings, weaknesses, prejudices and limitations are as much in need of consideration as are the methods and doctrines of the sciences themselves. The main purpose of the doctrine of the Idols is to show the weakness of the natural understanding (Idols of the Tribe and Cave) and the weakness of what is received by the tradition (Idols of the Market and Theatre).¹⁷⁷

The problems displayed in the Idols are heightened, if, as we saw in the *Protagoras*, most of those who spend their time as if concerned with philosophy are really lovers of honour when it comes to wisdom. If this is true, then philosophy or science is radically suspect from a political perspective.

¹⁷⁷ The Doctrine of the Idols can be found in aphorisms 39-68.

Suggesting Greek philosophy is the boyhood of knowledge also suggests that the tradition stemming from Greek philosophy must grow up and become a man. This goes some way to better understanding how Bacon both recognizes the importance of Greek philosophy, but also wishes to improve on it. The metaphor characterises Greek philosophy as a boy and at first glance the metaphor appears to be mixed because it begins by implying that the difference between boys and men is the same as the difference between speech and action. It ends, however, by implying that the difference between boys and men is difference between being infertile and fertile. This appearance disappears on further consideration. Suppose truth is a woman and the Greek philosophers were like boys in approaching her. The Greek philosophers were capable of discoursing with her, but could not know her as a woman. Bacon prescribes that philosophers should become men in approaching the truth. And if philosophers are successful in approaching the truth as a man approaches a woman, the truth will bear works.¹⁷⁸ Regarding Bacon's view of the role he is to play in the new philosophy, he speaks of himself as a nurse maid, proclaiming he has "the management of the childhood, as it were of philosophy and its course of nature history" (GI, p 26).¹⁷⁹ Bacon, as nursemaid, will teach those who philosophize as Greeks to grow up and philosophize like men.

With that said, Machiavelli, like Bacon, has "long experience with modern things and [has] continually read of ancient ones." To make Bacon's claims against the tradition

¹⁷⁸ It is likely that Bacon has in mind Machiavelli's *Prince*, chapter 25, p 98.

¹⁷⁹ Just before the above quotation Bacon cites the damage which fables do to the minds of youth. Again, Bacon's claims must be considered in light of the fact that he wrote a book interpreting fables.

clearer it is necessary to discern Bacon's account of the philosophic tradition.¹⁸⁰ Putting together the scattered evidence throughout his *New Organon* the history of philosophy can be divided into four parts: Pre-Socratic, Socratic, Medieval and Modern (NO, XCII, CXIV, CXXII).

3.3 Greek Philosophy as Sophistry

The distinction which Bacon makes between the early Greeks and the later Greeks is most thoroughly examined in aphorism LXXI. The section begins by rejecting the distinction between the philosophers and the sophists, which the Platonic dialogues labour to establish, and we have seen an example of in the *Protagoras*. Bacon's assertion against the later Greeks and against the Platonists in particular, is that the term 'sophist' was merely a term of derision, based on superficial considerations, which philosophers used as rhetoric against the ancient rhetoricians. In truth, when considered correctly, the ancients and the Platonists are also sophists.

Bacon argues that all Greek philosophy, which includes the thought of rhetoricians like Gorgias and sophists like Protagoras, is given more to disputation rather than invention. The distinction between philosophers and sophists rests on two points, neither of which, Bacon argues, justifies the distinction.

The similarity of all Greek philosophy, if not all philosophy up to the modern era, was the obsession with creating cults of learning through the foundation of schools. The Schools of philosophy were not dedicated to truth *per se*, but rather to establishing an institution to worship the dogmas of a first author. The system the later Greeks devised was thus

¹⁸⁰ Machiavelli, *Prince*, p 3.

little more than “the talk of idle old men to ignorant youths” with the aim of gaining their admiration (NO, LXXI). The later Greeks were thus more driven by their love of honour for wisdom than their love of wisdom. That this was shown to be Socrates’ more refined definition of sophistry in the *Protagoras*, turns Bacon’s charge into an accusation of hypocrisy. Bacon, of course, was not the first to charge philosophers with hypocrisy; Protagoras levelled the same charge against Socrates, with the effect of making his eyes go dim and his head dizzy.

Bacon cites two aspects of the case which Socrates often makes against the sophists: first that they are mercenary, having no affiliation with any given city, and second that their true motivation is discovered by the fact that they take money as payment for their instruction. Each claim is meant to draw the two most obvious points of distinction between most of the sophists and Socrates: Socrates was both poor, even shoeless, and only left Athens as her soldier.

Bacon’s rejection of the first claim is very important for political philosophy for it runs the risk of divorcing the pursuit of knowledge from political responsibility. Socrates’ activity, at least as it is presented in Plato’s *Crito* and *Apology*, argues that Socrates was in service to the city of Athens. This service proves that he is different from most sophists. Whether, on closer examination, Socrates’ mission was actually primarily motivated by a love of Athens as opposed his love of wisdom is immaterial at this point. In the *Apology* he argued that his philosophic activity was consequently good for the city, but it did not show that the good of the city was the aim of his philosophic activity. Rather, it is clear that Socrates was more concerned with disproving the claim of the Oracle at Delphi that “no one was wiser” than trying to make the Athenians better. It

becomes even clearer that Socrates' patriotism for Athens was limited by his consistent praise of the Spartan regime in dialogues such as the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*. Socrates was primarily a philosopher; it by no means follows that his followers were philosophers. It also does not follow that simply because someone does not travel that he is therefore a philosopher. Plato after-all was surely a philosopher and he travelled.

If it is irrelevant, why does Socrates make the claim? Understood at a deeper level, the claim is meant more to challenge whether the sophist is responsible for this teaching. Does the sophist take proper care for the virtue of his students, especially as it relates to politics? Put differently, the question is whether he is concerned with whether his teachings make his students better or worse. Socrates' attempts, in the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras*, to show that sophists do not know about virtue are sufficient to show that they are irresponsible. They literally don't know what they are doing, or, rather, claim to be doing something they are not. They don't know what they do not know and the implication is that their teachings may open the way to tyranny.

Returning to Bacon we can see that he is correct to dismiss the superficial consideration of national affiliation as the grounds for distinguishing sophists from philosophers. The question which remains is whether Bacon is sophist or philosopher; does he know the worth of his project?¹⁸¹

The second point on which sophists and philosophers differ is on the question of whether a fee should be charged for their teaching. It is, of course, one of Socrates' famous

¹⁸¹ This question is taken up by Heidi Studer in "Francis Bacon on the Political Dangers of Scientific progress." She argues the Fable of Daedalus in the *Wisdom of the Ancients* shows that Bacon was conscious of the limitations of his project.

complaints against the sophists that they charge a fee, while being unable to prove they understand what they claim they knew. Socrates argues the sophists would be justified in charging a fee, if in fact they were teaching anything of worth. The accusation of profit making, in itself, is not relevant to how all Greeks did philosophy. It may be that some profited while others did not, but these considerations are more political than philosophical. The truth of one's claim does not change if one is paid to make the claim, what is challenged is one's credibility. The philosopher's argument in this case is political and not philosophical, so Bacon, again, has a point in signalling out its insufficiency.

Bacon is explicit that his general criticism of the later Greek thinkers includes the whole range of ancient thought. He explicitly names four 'sophists' and seven philosophers as the objects of his criticism. Bacon and the ancients agree that Gorgias, Protagoras, Hippias and Polus are sophists, who aim only at 'professional' concerns. Bacon and the tradition disagree that the likes of Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Epicurus, Theophrastus, Chrysippus and Carneades are also subject to the same charge. In naming these seven figures in particular, Bacon also demonstrates his point that their true legacy is author worship and idolization. Bacon further demonstrates his point by citing the founders of dialectic, the epicurean school, the peripatetic school as well as the stoic and sceptic schools. That Bacon need only mention the names of the founders of the school to recall the entire school proves his point: these professionals are known primarily as founders of schools. This is true regardless of whether they are genuine philosophers in their own right; Bacon's concern is their legacy and effect on those who inherited their works. From this perspective, we only see schools of thought with worked out dogmas and

talking points to dispute with rival schools. The idolization of these dogmas turns them in to playbooks to be acted out and rarely improved. Schoolmen never deviate from the script.

Bacon would appear to have a just case in dismissing both criteria for distinguishing sophists from philosophers. Does it follow that all philosophers are also sophists? The question remains whether it is just to claim that all Greek philosophy primarily aimed at the creation of what can be summed up as a cult of personality and dumb doctrinarism.

One important figure, if one were to bring up the question of the cults of personality in philosophy, is conspicuous by his absence from Bacon's list, and that figure is Socrates. Is not Socrates *the* philosophic cult figure? The charge is perhaps better laid against Plato, for what are the dialogues but a monument to Socrates? As with the earlier charges, further proof is required to demonstrate that simply because a figure has become an object of worship, it does not mean he does not justly deserve that recognition. In the case of Plato's monument to Socrates, it must be shown that the dialogues somehow limit the search for wisdom: for Bacon's claim rests on the assumption that a cult of personality always leads to limits on the search for truth. It must be shown that the works were written for the sake of idolizing a person, and not to arouse a love of wisdom. In section LXXIX, Bacon further clarifies his criticism of the later Greek philosophy and leaves a clue about his thoughts on Socrates. Thanks to the work of the Seven Wisemen (excepting Thales) but *including* Socrates, moral philosophy became fashionable and diverted the minds of men from natural philosophy. There is some disagreement in the texts of the ancients about who exactly the seven men were, but Bacon, in excepting Thales and including Socrates, violates all the traditional accounts of who is counted

among the seven. However, if what unifies the seven are their neglect of natural philosophy and their focus on moral philosophy, as Socrates argues in the *Protagoras*, there may be some justice to Bacon's implicit characterisation.¹⁸² In including Socrates among the seven wise men of Greece, a claim not supported by the tradition, Bacon minimizes the importance of Socrates for understanding the history of philosophy. In Cicero's words, Socrates brought philosophy down from the heavens and into the cities, while Bacon argues this was already done by the seven wise men of Greece.¹⁸³ Socrates, rather than representing a revolutionary figure in philosophy, is just another figure as part of a popular movement to popularise the study of moral philosophy. If one were to complain to Bacon that he has neglected the importance of Socrates, would not Bacon's point regarding author worship be proven?¹⁸⁴

Not only is it the case that Socrates and all Greeks generated a tradition which set up cults of personality and doctrine and had a propensity to set up schools of thought aiming only at winning arguments, but the arguments were also focused on moral philosophy, to the peril of natural philosophy. It is primarily for this reason that Bacon claims he tends to prefer the earlier, pre-Socratic philosophers. For his great complaint against all received philosophy is that it has not made progress on knowledge of nature.

Bacon consistently praises the pre-Socratic natural philosophers over and above the later sophistic Greeks. In this group Bacon includes: Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, Democritus, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Xenophanes, Philolaus and others unnamed, but

¹⁸² It is interesting that in the *Protagoras* Socrates associates his teaching with the teaching of the seven men.

¹⁸³ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p 120n. There Strauss cites: Cicero's *Tuscan Disputations*, 5. 10.

¹⁸⁴ Lampert too quickly to places Socrates as the turning point in the history of philosophy. Bacon argues that Socrates really only differed from the seven wise men of Greece in method and Socrates essentially followed their work. See Lampert, *Modern Times*, pp 119-120.

excludes Pythagoras on the charge of being a mystic. They are praised for not setting up schools (NO, LXXI) and for engaging in the pursuit of truth without the parade of the later Greeks.

“But the first and most ancient seekers after truth were wont, with better faith and better fortune, too, to throw the knowledge which they gathered from the contemplation of things, and which they meant to store up for use, into aphorisms; that is, into short and scattered sentences, not linked together by an artificial method; and did not pretend or profess to embrace the entire art. But as the matter now is, it is nothing strange if men do not seek to advance in things delivered to them as long since perfect and complete” (NO, LXXXVI).

In the introduction to the *New Organon*, Bacon praises these more ancient Greeks, whose writings are lost, for taking a better middle road between the belief that “absolutely nothing can be known” and those who have “taken upon [themselves] to lay down the law of nature as a thing already searched out and known.” These more ancient Greeks decided that the disagreement between the dogmatic and sceptical school was to be settled, not by arguing but by trying. Though Bacon argues they still erred in “trusting entirely to the force of their understanding, applied no rule, but made everything turn upon hard thinking and perpetual working and exercise of the mind.”¹⁸⁵

They “were [also] not altogether free from the failing of their nation” and had too much ambition, were too vain and still sought to set up sects and win applause. Bacon also criticises some of the explicit doctrines of Leucippus, Democritus, Empedocles,

¹⁸⁵ He also praises the school of Democritus “which went further into nature than the rest. Matter rather than forms should be the object of our attention, its configurations and changes of configuration, and simple action, and law of action or motion; for forms are figments of the human mind, unless you will call those laws of action forms” (NO, LI). Bacon deals with motion at length in his second Book of Aphorisms. See especially, books 2 of NO, XLVIII.

Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Anaxagoras¹⁸⁶ on the grounds that even these thinkers were quick to “answer the question and affirm something positive in words” to “impose arbitrary restrictions on the nature of things” and to commit many other errors” (NO, LXIII).

Bacon’s preference for the more ancient Greek philosophers is based both on their method of presenting their philosophy, the aphorism, and their chosen subject matter, natural philosophy. In this sense, Bacon can be said to model himself on the ancient Greek philosophers whose writings are lost. Bacon, after all, in case of the *New Organon*, writes in aphorisms and his subject matter is to pave a new way to an active science or natural philosophy with the aim of forcing nature to reveal her secrets.

Bacon says very little of the contributions of the Roman and Arabic writers, including the works of the great theologians such as Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Of the Romans he argues that the diversion from natural philosophy continued in the schools of Stoicism, Scepticism, and Epicureanism. This lasted until the Middle Ages when theology took centre stage as the ruling concern of those who desire to gain honour for their wisdom. As it was in ancient times, starting with the Seven Wise men and Socrates who excessively praised moral philosophy, so too did the growth of the Christian religion

¹⁸⁶ Bacon does not mention either Xenophanes or Philolaus again. Xenophanes was ancient critic of religion and he is said to be one of the first monotheists. Philolaus is a Pythagorean who may have been a teacher of Democritus. Lampert seems to argue that Bacon’s history of philosophy in the *New Organon* as seriously meaning to suggest that Bacon is somehow returning to the philosophy of Democritus (*Modern Times*, p 139). Though Bacon praises parts of Democritus works how would Bacon know that Democritus arrived at these meditations in any way commensurate with ‘true induction’? Bacon’s history of philosophy is as much a fable as his *New Atlantis*.

cause the excessive dedication to theology to the exclusion and confusion of natural philosophy (NO, LXII, LXXIX and LXXXIX).¹⁸⁷

Modern times have afforded mankind new possibilities through innovations in literature, warfare and navigation. In homage to Machiavelli, Bacon compares his enterprise to Columbus' discovery of the New World. In his *Great Instauration* he performs a "coasting voyage along the shores of the arts and sciences" as a survey of what mankind has thus far accomplished (GI, p 17). In conducting this survey he has "found in the intellectual as in the terrestrial globe waste regions as well as cultivated ones" (GI, p 18). However, it is not his intention "merely to survey these regions in [his] mind, like [an] augur taking auspices, but to enter them like a general who means to take possession of them" (GI, p 18)¹⁸⁸

The inventions of the mariner's needle, the printing press and gun powder, show the potential for human beings to use nature's secrets as a means to have dominion over the earth and the relief of man's estate. Bacon, after outlining various other arguments for the potential benefit of his proposals, states: "Even if the breath of hope which blows on us from that New Continent were fainter than it is and harder to perceive, yet the trial (if we would not bear a spirit altogether abject) must by all means be made" (NO, CXIV).

¹⁸⁷ See Wienberger's approach to analyzing the role of religion generally in Bacon's work in *Faith, Science and Politics: Francis Bacon and the Utopian Roots of the Modern Age: A Commentary on Bacon's Advancement of Learning* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

¹⁸⁸ See also NO, 35 where Bacon compares himself to one of Machiavelli's models Ceasera Borgia (e.g. *Prince*, pp 26-33). The aphorism reads:

"It was said by Borgia of the expedition of the French into Italy, that they came with chalk in their hands to mark out their lodgings, not with arms to force their way in. I in like manner would have my doctrine enter quietly into the minds that are fit and capable of receiving it; for confutations cannot be employed when the difference is upon first principles and very notions, and even upon forms of demonstration."

Bacon, perhaps conscious of how “civil governments, especially monarchies, have been averse to such novelties, even in matters speculative” repeatedly defers to the authority of the early Greeks (NO, LXII).¹⁸⁹ Specifically, he is addressing the criticism that it is “strange and harsh” to “with one blow set aside all sciences and all authors” (NO, CXXII). Referring to his sincerity he says “had [I] chosen to deal less sincerely, [he] might easily have found authority for my suggestions by referring them either to the old times before the Greeks... or even, in part at least, to some of the Greek’s themselves” (NO, CXXII). With that said, as we have shown above, he mentions this authority often enough, even after the publication of the *New Organon*, to wonder about his sincerity.¹⁹⁰ However, Bacon argues that it makes as little difference as to whether there is ancient authority for his suggestions as it does to “whether the new world be that island of Atlantis which the ancients were acquainted, or now discovered for the first time” (NO, CXXII). As was the case with his including Socrates as one of the Seven wise men of Greece to undermine Socrates’ position as a founder, Bacon takes this position to undermine his role as founder.

Given his proclamation about sincerity, one wonders about the status of two of Bacon’s works, the *New Atlantis* and the *Wisdom of Ancients*, which seem to provide a ground for Bacon’s teachings and seem to find that ground in the authority of the ancients. Of special interest in this matter is the *New Atlantis* as it deals explicitly with the question of sincerity and openness, a question which Bacon has already answered in writing the *New Organon*. It is thus with irony that before his reference to Atlantis, Bacon states he “rejects all forms of fiction and imposture.”

¹⁸⁹ See Machiavelli’s *Prince*, chapter 2, pp 6-7.

¹⁹⁰ See Berns, “Conquest of Nature,” pp 12-23.

We can now see that Bacon's reference to these ancients is a device to rhetorically overcome the rhetorical accusation that one's teaching is novel.¹⁹¹ As Socrates' interpretation and critique of Simonides' Poem was used to bring to light the teachings of the 'wisest,' so too has Bacon cloaked at least some of his teachings in obvious works of fiction. With that said, and as Bacon himself admits, the end of his project is not the cultivation of knowledge, but rather its invention. It is often the case that knowledge is well served by its first founders, after which little progress is made by the disciples and followers. And the lack of any great progress in proceeding from the method of the ancients is the strongest part of Bacon's criticism of the tradition. But how strong is this criticism? First, it is important to recall that Bacon is not looking simply to know, but to know in such a way which can provide the means for not only increasing knowledge, but also power. In Bacon's words: "Truth, therefore, and utility are here the very same things; and works themselves are of greater value as pledges of truth than as contributing to the comforts of life" (NO, CXXIV). However, as the comforts of life increase in number, so too do the pledges of truth and man becomes more and more enlightened as his estate is relieved. It does not matter if the end of knowledge is utility or simply to know, because, as Bacon says, properly understood, 'they are the very same things.' It is important to note that Bacon makes this claim, not to lower the importance of speculative truth, but to raise the importance of practical works as representations of speculative truth.

Bacon's project aims at the conquest of nature, the increase of knowledge for man's utility and provides a way to overcome the failures of the past, which, in short, amount to

¹⁹¹ Again this is consistent with Bacon, *Wisdom of the Ancients*, preface.

the accusation that (almost) the entire history of philosophy should be called the history of sophistry. And it is natural philosophy, not morality or theology, which is the “great mother of the sciences. For all arts and all sciences, if torn from this root, though they may be polished and shaped and made fit for use, yet they will hardly grow” (NO, LXXIX).

In sum, human civilization from its birth to the 17th century has generated in philosophy nothing but “endless repetitions of the same thing, varying in method of treatment, but nothing new in substance” (GI, preface, p 7). In 2500 years little has been added to the substance of what these first authors accomplished. Rather, the work of the ancients stand “like statues, worshipped and celebrated, but not moved or advanced” (GI, preface, 8). The whole received tradition of philosophy is thus reduced to merely ‘embellish and cultivate’ the received Greek tradition.

3.4 The Scientific Character

Perhaps the Greek tradition is correct. Perhaps this cultivation of the Greek tradition represents the pinnacle of philosophy. Is it not the case that the received tradition, especially as it is presented by the scholastics working from Aristotle, contains an answer for every important question? What other aim could philosophy have but to make clear the most important questions – and if possible their answers? For Bacon, this amounts to a piece of sophistry meant to appear as an art to please the many who are weary of controversy and prefer easy answers. The argument for the superiority of a teaching simply because it has a long tradition, is fallacious. The longevity of consent is not a sign of truth. It is also insufficient because, even if we assume the truth of the received

tradition, how can we defend the continuation of institutions of learning? Philosophy, as love of wisdom, would have become wisdom. There would be nothing left to pursue. If one doesn't assume the truth of the tradition, then what does the state of knowledge look like after 2500 years of failure? Bacon offers a comparison to politics.

“For however various are the forms of civil polities, there is but one form of polity in the sciences; and that always has been and always will be popular. Now the doctrines which find most favor with the populace are those which are either contentious and pugnacious, or specious and empty — such, I say, as either entangle assent or tickle it. And therefore no doubt the greatest wits in each successive age have been forced out of their own course: men of capacity and intellect above the vulgar having been fain, for reputation's sake, to bow to the judgment of the time and the multitude; and thus if any contemplations of a higher order took light anywhere, they were presently blown out by the winds of vulgar opinions” (GI, p, 9-10).

The regime of the sciences has thus far been ruled by the political necessity for philosophers to retain the consent of the multitude. The product of this necessity has been useless philosophy which appeals to the tastes of the vulgar. And not only has it been thus far the case, but it *will always* be the case. Why? Can't science be wholly free from popular opinion to search out the truth? What makes it necessary that the association among philosophers will always be tempered by the need for public consent and therefore be threatened by the tastes of the multitude? Can the pursuit of science exist separate from, and independent of, common opinion? If it cannot, isn't this an outrageous insult to philosophy?

The problem is the same that is present in the Platonic dialogues in the person of Socrates, and through history in others such as Anaxagoras, Protagoras and Galileo, who all suffered political persecution for their activity. Political communities are based on opinions about the most important things which in turn rely on assumptions of the first

things. These assumptions can be challenged by philosophy and, if challenged, amount to an attack on the political community. A political community which was impervious to this kind of attack would have to base its opinions on those held by the “scientific community.” However, as anyone from our time knows, the consensus of the scientific community changes and thus offers a shifting base for common opinion, which conflicts with the political goal of stability. Those who defend the traditions and the prejudices of the multitude will gain honour from the multitude. With this honour also comes support from the rulers of the political regime.

In Bacon’s metaphor of the polity of the sciences there are at least three significant groups or classes. There are political rulers, the multitude and the philosophers. Bacon’s assertion is that success, as measured by recognition, in the sciences will always lay with pleasing and gaining the approval of the multitude. Because the multitude is the most secure base of political power there is always a potential conflict between the philosopher and the sovereign, which perhaps explains the prejudice of Monarchs against novelty, even in matters speculative. Precisely because philosophers must gain the approval of the multitude to gain a reputation for their wisdom, they usurp a “kind of dictatorship in the sciences” by setting their declarations or laws with great confidence to please the multitude. As such “The discoveries which have hitherto been made in the sciences are such as lie close to vulgar notions, scarcely beneath the surface” (NO, XVIII). If this relationship has always and will always exist, how can Bacon hope for improvement? Won’t all knowledge that has the consent of the multitude necessarily be superficial?

To see how Bacon solves this problem we must first look at how Bacon characterises the philosophic dispositions of the past. Bacon outlines four types of philosophic disposition,

which are based on four intellectual attributes dealing with both the scope and substance of the enquiry. These dispositions are discussed in the preface to the *New Organon* and are thus given prior to Bacon's doctrine of the Idols and his account of true induction.

The four dispositions are: dogmatism, scepticism, liberty and deference.¹⁹² The first two refer to the manner in which a philosopher states his conclusions and the second refers to the attitude in which the philosopher takes to received opinion or the tradition. This four part typology outlines the limitations of one of the two tribes or streams of philosophy, those dedicated to cultivation as opposed to those dedicated to invention (NO, p 36).

As is apparent from the labels that I have given to these characteristics, they act as extremes or opposites of one and another. It is Bacon's intention to show the limitations of both extremes to point to the correct approach or the correct scientific character. It also shows, in conjunction with the doctrine of the Idols, which explains these extremes more fully, the impediments to progress in knowledge. As it is useful to understand the Idols, so too is it useful to outline these four kinds of cultivators of knowledge which are to the "great detriment of the sciences" (GI, p 11).

The first scientific character which Bacon outlines and then criticizes is composed of scepticism with deference. This philosopher has usurped a kind of "dictatorship in the sciences" and represents therefore the most common scientific mind. This type of philosopher, whom we will call conventional, aims to win the honour from the vulgar by "bow[ing] to the judgment of the time and the multitude." When they do "come to themselves," by which Bacon seems to be mean, when they turn to their studies proper,

¹⁹² See John E Leary, *Francis Bacon and the Politics of Science* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), pp 178-184).

they come to difficulties in their explanations. Rather than refining their methods and searching for explanations, they cover their ignorance by blaming the nature of the enquiry itself or the capacity of the human mind itself. So the conventional philosopher is both deferential to received opinion and sceptical of the power of the human mind to know. Bacon describes the product of their work as follows.

“Now for those things which are delivered and received, this is their condition: barren of works, full of questions; in point of enlargement slow and languid, carrying a show of perfection in the whole, but in the parts ill filled up; in selection popular, and unsatisfactory even to those who propound them; and therefore fenced round and set forth with sundry artifices” (NO, p 10).

This perhaps best portrays the typical sophistic mindset. A vulgar version of Protagoras would fit this description, especially upon consideration of his ‘man is the measure principle’ and the tension implicit in his obvious deference and distain for common opinion.

The remaining three types of philosophers do try to expand the scope of knowledge, but each is unsuccessful or unworthy in its own way. As Bacon too aims to expand the scope of knowledge, these vices are of special importance.

The next scientific character, who we will call the modest philosopher, is dogmatic about his ability to add to the sciences, but deferential to authority of the received tradition. This character allows the philosopher to assert his liberty while retaining a claim to modesty through his assent to received tradition and custom. This character is to the great detriment to the sciences because it is “hardly possible to admire an author and go past him.” The assent of the modest philosopher to the bulk of received play books of philosophy and tradition effectively undermines the value of his addition. Though this

strategy to contributing to knowledge does improve the condition of knowledge, it does not extend its range. In short, this modest method will never add anything substantially new to the sciences and will therefore never add anything great. This portrays well the specialist or those who inherit the work of a great philosopher. At best their character is conventional and narrow and is able to only add small improvements to knowledge.

The next character is dogmatic about his ability to add to the sciences and is free from the tradition. These characters, whom we will call the imperial philosophers, have “gone more boldly to work and, taking it all for open matter and given their genius full play, have made passage for themselves and their opinions by pulling down and demolishing former ones” (GI, p 11). However, their aim in destruction was not “to extend the arts and philosophy in substance” but to “transfer the kingdom of opinions to themselves” (GI, p 11). Though this combination of character would seem to be most beneficial, in that knowledge can be expanded and it is not chained to the received opinion, its vice lie in its intention. As with all the members of this tribe of philosophers who aim at the cultivation of knowledge, rather than its invention, their aim, or the consequence of their effort, is to win reputation and win a measure of rule in the realm of opinion. This portrait would fit Bacon’s characterisation of Aristotle. The vast scope of Aristotle’s work and the authority with which it is laid down make him a obvious candidate for the imperial philosopher.

The last type of philosopher, who we will call the conjectural philosopher, combines scepticism of the power to know with liberty from tradition. While they are correct to allow their minds liberty, they falter in relaxing the severity of their inquiry, remaining happy with conjecture or probability. It is clear that remaining content with conjecture

and probability adds nothing to the knowledge of nature, and certainly is of no use in creating works. This character would be described as a vulgar version of Socrates, who famously claimed he could only know what he did not know. At the height of *Republic*, for example, he forces Glaucon to rest content with his opinion about the child of the Good, promising the full account at a later time.

From this brief outline of the four traditional approaches to knowledge we can infer Bacon's preferred character of the scientific mind. At first, one might believe that the scientific mind should be confident in its ability to know and add to knowledge. In this sense Bacon clearly does want to maintain some of Aristotle. However, Bacon himself explicitly says that there is an agreement between those who hold the doctrine which "denied that certainty can be attained" and his way of "proceeding at first setting out." The difference between them is that Bacon believes, that with help and the proper way of proceeding, the senses can provide the correct ground. The sceptical ground of Bacon's science is the foundation for knowledge. Bacon takes the explicitly opposite view of the Protagorean sceptic, setting Protagoras' famous doctrine as an Idol of the Tribe. He states:

"The Idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it" (NO, XLI).

Second, Bacon does follow Aristotle and Socrates in taking all fields of knowledge as open. However, after the fields have been taken as open, and the coasting voyage of the sciences is complete, the scientist must submit to the method because the human mind will have its proper help. In this sense Bacon's approach is an improved Socratic approach.

The question then becomes whether Bacon is like the Aristotlean desiring to 'transfer the kingdom of opinions' to himself. Bacon does admit to his desire to enter the regions of knowledge and take possession of them like a general. However, the difference lies in their aims, which is not only to gain a reputation for wisdom or other low aims, but primarily to gain "the benefit and use of life" governed with charity (GI, p 15). Or, in slightly different language, Bacon pursues knowledge, not as an opinion to be held, but "to the lay the foundation, not of any sect or doctrine, but utility and human power" (GI, p 16). This is, of course, different from the disposition of the practicing philosopher himself, who will be specialised, meticulously following the method.

Lastly, though the scientific knowledge gained from his method will be certain, he can only provide "hopes" that his project as a whole will be successful. Bacon himself, though critical of these cultivators of knowledge, nonetheless turns their vices into virtues. His relationship to the cultivators of knowledge is less clear than his relationship to the interpreters of nature, with whom he plants himself firmly.

Bacon's criticisms of the failures of the cultivators of knowledge, which recall are "not hostile of alien to one another, but bound by mutual service", are interesting because Bacon concedes to this school of philosophy superiority in ability to win assent and

consent (NO, XXVIII). The issue, of course, is that though this kind of demonstration can win arguments and create agreement, it doesn't necessary "get a hold of the thing" (NO, XIII) or "master the thing" (NO, XXIX). Bacon's main rhetorical problem is to convince the 'sons of knowledge' to pursue interpretation given that cultivation is so adept at winning consent. How is Bacon to win the assent of the potential 'sons of knowledge' to his method? Does he not have to employ and set forth conjecture (NO, XCII)? In fact, it maybe that Bacon is counting on his conjectures to win assent: "Anticipations are a ground sufficiently firm for consent, for even if men went mad all after the same fashion, they might agree one with another well enough" (NO, XXVII). Bacon must use the old methods, the anticipations of the mind, to prepare and convince those predisposed to pursue his method. Bacon uses the power of the old philosophies to convince the sons of knowledge to embrace the new philosophy. In this sense the 'sons of science' do not need to be free minds. They can still pursue the same ends as the sophists, the desire for honour for wisdom, and still effectively add to Baconian science.

His persistent, and putting two and two together, dubious presentation of his project as somehow grounded in the lost writings of the ancient Greeks becomes clearer. It is Bacon's way of signalling to his reader that it is the cultivators of knowledge, not the interpreters of nature, who have the political power. Bacon's constant deference to an almost mythical ancient knowledge, in his *Wisdom of the Ancients*, *New Atlantis*, *New Organon*, and the *Great Instauration* (the very work where he says such an approach is less sincere, CXXII) seems to be an invitation to cultivate, or at least understand, ancient

Greek philosophy.¹⁹³ This knowledge is necessary to better understand the moral and political meaning of his project.

3.5 Science as Popular Polity

Given the form of polity in the sciences has been and will always be popular, and that assent is essential for popular government, the anticipations of the mind remain powerful and important. They are powerful because they move people even if they cannot master or take hold nature, and it is people who conduct science. We have already covered in some detail the nature of the citizens of the regime of the sciences; it is now time to turn to the regime. Bacon is emphatic that the regime of the sciences has been and will always be popular, so after Bacon introduces his method, the regime of the sciences will continue to be popular. Surely, if the character of the citizen is to be purged and ordered by the doctrine of the Idols and reordered towards the collection of histories and true induction, there must be a correspondent change in the regime.

The original regime of the sciences was ruled by the idols of the mind, specifically the playbooks of the old philosophies, which in turn relied on the vulgar many for approval. The citizens of the regime were not conscious of the Idols of the tribe, how the very nature of their unaided intellect was prone to errors. The citizens were not conscious of

¹⁹³ Some scholars have suggested that this means Plato above others. In Fulton Anderson's book *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon* he states of Bacon's works generally "Of Bacon's reflections on thinkers of the past, none are more striking than those which have to do with Plato." Fulton H. Anderson, *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p 124. Other more recent scholars also have extended discussions of the importance of Plato for Bacon's thought. See for example: Lampert, *Modern Times*, pp 123-137; John C. Briggs, *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature*, (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1989), pp175-189. Others such as Whitney, however, in his *Francis Bacon and Modernity* emphatically argues against any conflation of Plato and Bacon. See Charles Whitney, *Francis Bacon and Modernity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p 127.

the idols of the cave, how their own individual natures, education and training affected their understanding and coloured their conclusions. The citizens were not conscious of the idols of the Market Place, how their very speech with another and their dependence on the vocabulary of false philosophy kept them from coming to clear conclusions. In short, they did not see that their natural reason was not sufficient to contribute to the progress of knowledge. And lastly, they did not see that the whole history of philosophy was but so many playbooks, which contain tales “more compact and elegant and more as they would wish them to be” than true philosophy.

The polity of the sciences, in the beginning, was ordered by faction. Schools of philosophy were pitted against one another, in constant debate. The regime in its origin did not allow for schools or disputations but was concerned primarily with natural philosophy and communicated that philosophy in ways which were not amenable to dogmatization.¹⁹⁴

This regime of natural philosophy was eventually overthrown by the influence of the seven wise men, Socrates, and their most illustrious followers, Plato and Aristotle. And perhaps through Socrates’ death and Plato’s immortalization of him there was a revolution in the regime which caused faction and narrowed the scope of the regime’s concern. Moral philosophy captured the minds of men and ruled through the later Roman period in the schools of Stoicism and Epicureanism.

¹⁹⁴ In this state there was also a diversity of schools of thought, something Bacon seems to want to return to. Attacks on the lack of diversity of scientific opinion seem to me to be clear attacks on the influence of the church dogma on scientific thought.

Still later, after the rise of Christianity and the fall of the Roman Empire, the regime shifted its focus again, this time to theology. After the rise of Christianity, all philosophy became eclipsed by theology to the point where the regime of the sciences fell under the dictatorship of Aristotle through the works of St Thomas Aquinas and other theologians. And this was to determinant of the sciences, but most especially the determinant of natural philosophy. By Bacon's time he could only see a chaotic mix of prejudice and error that stood in the way of progress.

So Bacon's aim was to cause another revolution in the regime of the sciences, to focus on the natural sciences and to do so in a way which would encourage progress. What was required was to improve the contribution of the average schoolmen and replace the concern with theology with nature. The main problem of the past regimes was that most progress was made by a few great or first thinkers, after whom only dogma was perpetuated. What was required was a way to help all men of science, sophist and philosopher alike, to be able to contribute, and this was done by the scientific method. The rule of the sciences will shift from first authors to the collective pursuit of science. Under the guidance of method, all scientists will contribute equally to the progress of knowledge. It is the scientific method which allows for this equality and for progress in the sciences. Bacon's method modifies and orders the popular polity of the sciences because his method is meant to make men's minds more equal, or more accurately, to level the meaning of the output of men's labours of the mind.

Bacon, in explaining his project to the King in the preface to the *Great Instauration*, states that he "has provided the machine, but the stuff must be gathered from the facts of nature." In the preface to the *New Organon*, Bacon states: "There remains but one course

for the recovery of a sound and healthy condition – namely, that the entire work of the understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself be from the outset not left to take its own course, but guided at every step; and the business itself be done as if my machinery.” In LXI, when speaking of the Idols of the Theatre he states “But the course I propose for the discovery of the sciences is such as leaves little to acuteness and strength of wits, but places all wits and understandings nearly on a level. Later, in CXXII of *New Organon*, Bacon states: “For my way of discovering sciences goes far to level men's wit and leaves but little to individual excellence, because it performs everything by the surest rules and demonstrations.”

Bacon's suggestions for the reform of the regime of the sciences do not change the popular character of the regime. In a sense, it is more democratic because each citizen's contribution is more equal.¹⁹⁵ All scientists are equal under the ‘laws of demonstration.’ It is the strength of the laws of demonstration which at once maintain the equality of the popular regime, make it more resilient to usurpation and dictatorship, and allow for progress in the sciences. Leary has suggested that Bacon's method is in a sense authoritarian, but it is authoritarian without a person in authority.¹⁹⁶ The authority is the ‘laws of demonstration.’ A regime where all contribute equally under the law is a kind of democracy.

We have seen that Bacon wants to reorder the regime of the sciences. Bacon describes the changes to the sciences using a variety of martial and political metaphors. We have seen that, following the political metaphor of the sciences to a popular polity, Bacon wishes to

¹⁹⁵ See Leary, *Politics of Science*, 225-230 for his account of how Baconian Science works as a machine.

¹⁹⁶ Leary, *Politics of Science*, 259-263.

reform this regime by introducing a new kind of rule of law into the sciences. Previous laws were unstable and open to usurpation and dictatorship. We have seen that the new laws of demonstration will strengthen the regime and protect it against those desiring to transfer the kingdom of opinions to themselves and to set up a “dictatorship in the sciences.” In this sense Bacon’s project is intended to liberate the sciences from tyranny, especially the tyranny of Aristotle and the scholastics.

In the preface to the *New Organon*, Bacon offers a metaphor which he emphasises to his readers they should look into as they would a glass. The metaphor is meant to demonstrate the madness of the current regime in the sciences and the impotence of the unaided intellect. Since Bacon asks that his reader consider the metaphor carefully, I have quoted it in full.

“Now (to pause a while upon this example and look in it as in a glass) let us suppose that some vast obelisk were (for the decoration of a triumph or some such magnificence) to be removed from its place, and that men should set to work upon it with their naked hands, would not any sober spectator think them mad? And if they should then send for more people, thinking that in that way they might manage it, would he not think them all the madder? And if they then proceeded to make a selection, putting away the weaker hands, and using only the strong and vigorous, would he not think them madder than ever? And if lastly, not content with this, they resolved to call in aid the art of athletics, and required all their men to come with hands, arms, and sinews well anointed and medicated according to the rules of the art, would he not cry out that they were only taking pains to show a kind of method and discretion in their madness? Yet just so it is that men proceed in matters intellectual — with just the same kind of mad effort and useless combination of forces — when they hope great things either from the number and cooperation or from the excellency and acuteness of individual wits; yea, and when they endeavor by logic (which may be considered as a kind of athletic art) to strengthen the sinews of the understanding, and yet with all this study and endeavor it is apparent to any true judgment that they are but applying the naked intellect all the time; whereas in every great work to be done by the hand of man it is manifestly impossible, without instruments and machinery,

either for the strength of each to be exerted or the strength of all to be united” (NO, preface, 34-35).¹⁹⁷

First, it compares the desired end of philosophy to the movement of a great obelisk “for the decoration of a triumph or some such magnificence.” The end of philosophy is therefore to establish a sign of a great triumph. In the context of Baconian science, the triumph to be celebrated is man’s conquest of nature and the fruits of that conquest will be the decoration. It is also clear from the analogy that this task cannot be accomplished by a single intellect, but must be done by many workers. It is therefore as much a political enterprise as it is a philosophical enterprise. The analogy highlights how the current organization of the sciences is ill equipped to the task at hand. It is ill organized because it is ruled by Aristotle’s logic, which is excellent and well equipped to increase the individual strength of an intellect, but is less capable of unifying the strengths of a number of intellects. In comparing the ‘logic’ to the art of athletics, Bacon argues, as he does explicitly elsewhere, that the logic is meant to prepare the intellect for contests, not works. This art, when applied to the purpose which Bacon has put forward, is ill suited to the point of madness or comedy. The problem is not that you cannot organize men to pursue a single goal under the old logic (Bacon’s history of philosophy, given above, shows that, in fact, the many are too eager to pursue esteemed goals) but that you cannot unify their strengths in subtle and more powerful ways. The old logic can muster great force, but it cannot direct that force with much precision or to subtle purpose. What is required is another art, with the aid of which men’s intellectual strengths could be united and made capable of tasks which before were either extremely difficult, if not impossible.

¹⁹⁷ Leary has an extended discussion of this section, but uses a variety of works, though interestingly enough, not the *New Organon*. See Leary, *Politics of Science*, pp 152-154

As the old art is compared to athletics, the new is compared to the mechanical arts. Bacon's method on this example would be compared to the intelligent use of ropes, levers and cranes. The mechanical arts themselves also use a division of labour in employing their devices to effect results. To affect the result which the analogy suggests, more than art would be required. Different mechanical arts challenge, combine and improve strength and precision. These mechanical helps have been compared to scientific instruments, but they can also be more precisely compared to the scientific method itself. The method, as much as actual instruments, artificially helps the mind. The design of experiments and the division of the task into parts is what unites the powers of the scientists.

The regime of the sciences under the old logic or law was dedicated only to the virtue of being able to best your opponents and establish a dictatorship. The regime was not anarchic, but dedicated to the rule of the best or most powerful mind. In a sense the competition in the old regime of the sciences established a natural aristocracy among the learned. The first authors are held in high esteem as the most virtuous, and the great majority are left only to labour under their rule, adding little. But from the perspective of this regime what could be added? If the works of Aristotle, modified and improved in small part by his predecessors, answer all the important questions, this regime would seem perfectly reasonable. The old regime of the sciences, based on this competitive and aristocratic principle, only becomes absurd relative to the task which Bacon himself posits: the removal of the obelisk or the triumph over nature. The old regime possessed the art and the grounds to determine who the best among them was and who was fit to rule. Though the new regime of the sciences is capable of greater works, it is less

capable of establishing the aristocracy of the old regime. In levelling wits, the greatest minds no longer rule.

The scientific method is meant to level minds by grounding all science in the controlled experiment. All observations are made equal by well designed experiments and rules of demonstration. Each practitioner in the sciences conducts reproducible experiments and methodically catalogues his observations as contributions to the histories which will serve as the material from which to begin to truly induce the axioms and ideas of nature.

The glory of aspiring to rule the kingdom of opinions is replaced by a general progress of knowledge for the sake of the 'relief of mans estate.' The prospect of being responsible for inventions, and worthy of the glory, is also dangled before the scientific mind. As Bacon states in CXXIX of the *New Organon*:

“Again, it is well to observe the force and virtue and consequences of discoveries, and these are to be seen nowhere more conspicuously than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, and of which the origin, though recent, is obscure and inglorious; namely, printing, gunpowder, and the magnet. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world; the first in literature, the second in warfare, the third in navigation; whence have followed innumerable changes, insomuch that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries.”

The citizens of the regime of the sciences will consent to the end of Bacon's project, the relief of man's estate, because it would make it possible for the multitude to appreciate the work of the sciences (NO, XCI). Bacon explicitly says of his philosophy that it “will [not] come down to the apprehension of the vulgar except by its utility and effects” (NO, Preface, p 36). The consent of the vulgar required of any regime of the sciences is generated by the works and the benefits of that science. This has the advantage of

winning the required consent of the many without having to compromise the substance of science to the tastes of the many. It is clear that Bacon believes the honour received from the multitude for being able to provide mankind with inventions which “relieve man’s estate” will be sufficient for the sciences to gain the trust and consent of the vulgar multitude. This will not be a perfect relationship precisely because, as the science improves, this ground for opinion will shift. As Bacon notes, this will upset most people, who like easy answers, but it is arguable that the pay off of benefits will outweigh the discomfort created by shifting opinions. This is by no means all there is to say on this subject. For example, a public science which guides public opinion is also a persistent challenge to religion, which is a common guide to morality. Bacon presents his philosophy as best guided by the Christian virtue of charity, however, Bacon’s understanding of charity is also divorced from knowledge of good and evil, and therefore from morality and theology. He states in the *Great Instauration* that “knowledge being now discharged of that venom which the serpent infused into it, and which makes the mind of man to swell, we may not be wise above measure and sobriety, but cultivate truth in charity” (GI, p 15).

In the same vein Bacon later says:

“I would address one general admonition to all — that they consider what are the true ends of knowledge, and that they seek it not either for pleasure of the mind, or for contention, or for superiority to others, or for profit, or fame, or power, or any of these inferior things, but for the benefit and use of life, and that they perfect and govern it in charity. For it was from lust of power that the angels fell, from lust of knowledge that man fell; but of charity there can be no excess, neither did angel or man ever come in danger by it” (GI, p 15-16).

This is not to say that Bacon is naive, that he believes men will not use knowledge for profit, fame or power. These aims of the pursuit of knowledge and their consequences are

investigated in the *Wisdom of the Ancients* in the fables, *Thypon*, *Orpheus*, and *Atlanta*.¹⁹⁸

I cite the above to suggest that though Bacon cites the Christian end of charity to govern his science, it is far from clear that his motives are Christian. Bacon's use of Machiavelli should at least bring this view into question. In fact, one of Bacon's most memorable quotes regarding the relationship between the divine intention is "'The glory of God is to conceal a thing; the glory of the king to search it out" (NO, CXXIX).

With regard to the glory of a king, the second relationship to consider is that between sovereigns and the philosophers. First, there are many potential political benefits for a sovereign who supports an active science. Bacon's example of gunpowder comes quickly to mind. Bacon does not spell out that his active science may provide military advantages. There would be political dangers in pronouncing this too publicly. However, he does explicitly appeal to his "most gracious and mighty King" and indicates how his support of this project will "kindle this new light in the darkness of philosophy [and] be the means to making this age famous to posterity" (NO, Epis. Ded. P 5-6) The promise of fame and power should be compelling inducements for an ambitious king to support the philosophers' work.

3.6 Conclusion: Interpretation and Cultivation

But is the work towards the Interpretation of Nature going to be sufficiently compelling enough, that we can safely say the work of Ancient philosophy will be subsumed and

¹⁹⁸ Francis Bacon, "The Wisdom of the Ancients," in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, edited by James Spedding, Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Heath. (London: Longmans & Company. 1857-1890), pp 825-826; 835-836; and 847-848.

made obsolete by the philosophy of the future? Can all important knowledge be reduced to Interpretations of Nature? I would suggest that Bacon's more poetic works (*Wisdom of the Ancients* and *New Atlantis*), which seem to open the door to the philosophy of the ancients, and which works may have the most important insights into the meaning of Bacon's thought, suggests otherwise. The question then arises as to why Bacon would bury the insight that, in a sense, he really does believe that the cultivators and inventors of knowledge are in mutual service to another. The answer seems to me to lay in Bacon's assessment of the history of philosophy. He states often that in the school based system of knowledge, a work most often flourished in the hands of its first author and decayed in the hands of those who inherited his work.

Bacon repeats twice that it is possible, if not likely that there will be new systems of philosophy generated in the future. This seems to be in spite of his hope for the success of his science (XLIV and LXII). Bacon characterises the disagreement between his approach and the ancient philosophical systems as follows:

“To attempt refutations in this case [i.e. of all past systems] would be merely inconsistent with what I have already said, for since we agree neither upon principles nor upon demonstrations there is no place for argument. And this is so far well, inasmuch as it leaves the honor of the ancients untouched. For they are no wise disparaged — the question between them and me being only as to the way. For as the saying is, the lame man who keeps the right road outstrips the runner who takes a wrong one. Nay, it is obvious that when a man runs the wrong way, the more active and swift he is, the further he will go astray” (NO, LXI).

Bacon concedes that the ancient method allows more for individual excellence. His metaphor even suggests that, in a sense, those constrained by his method will be lame in power compared to the ancients. However, their virtue lies in the fact that they follow a truer path.

Returning to the analysis of the different types of scientific disposition, most are content to add a little to the established tradition. To the point of Bacon's writing of the *New Organon* "these mediocrities and middle ways so much praised, in differing to the opinions and customs, turn to the great determinate of the sciences" (GI, p 10-11). However, if these mediocrities and middle ways deferred to a systematically collected natural history to make more and more particular experiments, it would be to the great benefit of mankind. Bacon's praise of the 'sons of knowledge' and his thumotic call for them to courageously follow his path is undermined by his reference to his method as the machine. If it is really honour for knowledge which most seek, as we suspect from our reading of the *Protagoras*, then Bacon's method, though it levels intellectual liberty, is none the less satisfying. The sons of knowledge can be honoured for their knowledge.

What is left then for those who desire to "give their genius full play" and wish to "transfer the kingdom of opinions to themselves" (GI, preface, p 11)? Or for those who seek to "make passage for themselves by pulling down and demolishing former ones" (NO, preface, p 11)? The emphasis in Bacon's analysis of these strands of the philosophic consciousness is the liberty of the mind. If the reader of Bacon purges himself of the Idols of the Mind, why would he give up that liberty to become a cog or spring in Bacon's machine? It is perhaps here where the cultivation of received knowledge, if not its creative and philanthropic reinterpretation, presents the highest challenge.¹⁹⁹

So a few possibilities exist regarding the relationship between these few philosophers who will desire to exercise the liberty of their genius and those who would be satisfied to

¹⁹⁹ It is hard not to follow Lampert's reading of Bacon as a kind of Nietzschean philosopher. That Bacon himself was such an inspiration to men not primarily devoted to experimental science is a testament to at least this aspect of Lampert's view. See Lampert, *Modern Times*, pp 140-141.

receive honour for their scientific work by labouring within the confines of the machine of Bacon's method. Or put differently and more in the spirit of the polemic of the *New Organon*, satisfied to receive their honour as a soldier in Bacon's war to conquer nature.

One possibility is that Bacon's project intentionally aims to end the influence a great mind can have on the regime of the sciences. Because of the new equality among the scientific minded and the slow but sure growth of knowledge piece by piece, authors will find it increasingly difficult to hold sway over the kingdom of opinions. This will be certainly true in the realm of natural philosophy. Scientific opinion will only be that which has been inter-subjectively verified by the community of those practicing Baconian experimental science. All current knowledge can only be seen as provisional until enough material has been gathered and vetted by experiment to ground the New Philosophy. Based on the evidence cited above, this would also appear to mean that all current morality is also provisional and thus what is true about great minds in the natural sciences is also true in the moral sciences.

However, Bacon also says that his method must be modified according to its subject matter. Can true induction and experimental science provide the grounds for the synoptic judgements required in the *architectonic* fields of knowledge such as politics and morals?²⁰⁰ Bacon does give some indication that the study of human nature in the Baconian way can contribute to knowledge of politics through the scientific study of the passions. But it is dubious that a scientific study of the passions can rank the passions, which is what is required for synoptic judgments about the passions.

²⁰⁰ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1194a-1194b10.

If science replaces the synoptic philosopher's ability to rule in the realm of opinion we arrive basically at what we have today: Value relativism and its consequent fanaticism as well as an obsession with means over explicit consideration of ends, which raises efficiency to the status of the ultimate end. I believe that in consideration of Bacon's works as a whole and the analysis given above, it is unlikely that this was the intended outcome of the New Philosophy.

This brings us to another possibility. That Bacon is serious that the two tribes of students of philosophy do work in mutual service and that the cultivators of knowledge that are not seduced into the Bacon's machine are still required for their judgment. To prevent the above consequence, Bacon attempted to maintain the importance of rank in politics and matters intellectual. *Of the Wisdom of the Ancients* develops the importance of this rank and I have laid out how it is implicit even in the *New Organon* which most forcefully presents Baconian Science.

From the point of view of our time, which is under the rule of the democratic prejudice, it would be easy to conclude that Bacon's judgement that the gradation of rank between the tribes of students of philosophy could be maintained, is naive. However, given that the best minds will not be satisfied to work as part of a machine, the attempt to establish new philosophical systems which maintain rank, is inevitable.

That Bacon's intention was not realised provides us with a clue as to the cause of the many problems in the modern world. However, one may wonder why Bacon did not make his political teaching more accessible and rhetorically more powerful to help ensure it continued to be realised. While good agreements have been put forward that Bacon did

foresee the dangers of scientific progress, it is unclear whether he could have foreseen some of the particular problems caused by the combination of a democratic enlightenment with a massive growth in scientific power. When looking at the modern condition from the perspective of Baconian science, as laid out in this section, we see the problem is the democratic enlightenment, not technological modern science.²⁰¹

I return now to my main points regarding Bacon. First, Bacon's philosophy ought not to be reduced to his scientific method. Rather his scientific method must be understood to be a part, or rather a tool or *Organon* of a larger political project. The project, as it has been presented here, is divided into two parts, his *Great Instauration* on the one hand and his moral and political works on other. I have argued that Bacon saw the two parts of his project as related and mutually reinforcing. I have attempted to show that the seeds of Bacon's moral teachings are scattered throughout Bacon's most overtly polemical work against ancient science and Ancient philosophy. In the *New Organon* in particular, and in his works as a whole, the moral or political side of the project is buried in his persistent references to a mytho-historical Greek past, where natural philosophy flourished and his philosophy is grounded. It is uncovering why Bacon persists in these references that we see the full scope of his intention.

In considering this rhetorical strategy in light of the philosopher's encounter with the sophist in the *Protagoras*, we have been able to see how Bacon science relates to Platonism. Plato engaged in both philosophy and an aspect of sophistry, which is to say in an esoteric and exoteric project. Bacon also divided his philosophic project into

²⁰¹ This reading obviously supports Nietzsche's diagnosis, especially as presented in *Beyond Good and Evil*, of the tensions in modern times. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp 192-194. See also the whole of Heidi Studer, "Francis Bacon on the Political Dangers of Scientific Progress."

establishing exoteric natural philosophy, and esoteric political teachings. Bacon himself pronounced in the *Advancement of Learning* and in other places that his political thoughts would only be available esoterically.²⁰²

It also shows that Bacon's thought, as well as Plato's, considers the importance of the rank between those who claim to pursue wisdom. Plato attempted to establish a respectable place for philosophy in the city by advocating its ability to be civically and morally responsible. Bacon, in a more radical turn, attempted to make those concerned with honour for knowledge contribute to knowledge and the benefit of mankind. Though Bacon follows Machiavelli's rejection of the ancients, the relationship between Platonic philosophy and early English philosophy is more complex than is generally admitted. I will return to this in the conclusion of this thesis.

²⁰² For a summary of Bacon's citations see Studer, "Cross my Heart," pp 4-5.

4 **Thomas Hobbes' Public Political Science**

4.1 **Introduction**

Thomas Hobbes is famous for his political philosophy because he, like Machiavelli, wrote openly about politics. Hobbes' decision to do this should be viewed in contrast to Bacon's decision to abstain from consideration of the art of government, except, perhaps, in abortive, posthumous works or in his discussion of fables.²⁰³ Bacon followed Protagoras' choice, which Plato's Socrates often also chose, to discuss political matters as if he were speaking as a father to children through fables. In a sense, the Platonic dialogues as a whole are tales which portray a beautiful Socrates.²⁰⁴ Hobbes, along with

²⁰³ See *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, II. 2 and V.

²⁰⁴ The dialogue the *Statesman*, is the dialogue one would expect to be explicitly about the art of government which from the title. It certainly cannot be understood as a frank and open discussion of statesmanship.

Aristotle and Machiavelli, chose to speak more openly about political matters and the art of government.

This final section of this dissertation aims to examine a second side of modernity which was developed in the principles of the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, and that is mass politics.²⁰⁵ The previous section on Francis Bacon aimed to show how Bacon modified the community of the sciences, which was developed in the ancient world and continued through medieval times. Bacon's reorganization of the community of the sciences downplays the importance of first authors and focuses on the knowledge that is passed from generation to generation and how knowledge can be made to contribute to the relief of man's estate. This organization was argued to have met many of the weaknesses exposed in the community of sophists in Plato's *Protagoras*.

This section has a dual purpose. The first is to show that Hobbes works from Bacon's account of the history of philosophy and in some senses relies on the success of Baconian science. The second aims to show how the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, which appears in some of its broad elements to be sophistic, does address some of the political problems examined in Plato's *Protagoras*.

4.2 Hobbes's History of Political Philosophy: *De Cive*

²⁰⁵ C. B. Macpherson gives a fascinating account of Hobbes' political philosophy in *Leviathan* where he attempts to demonstrate that Hobbes was the founder/creator of the 'possessive individual' important to liberal theory and market based society. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962), p1 and pp 100-106.

In *The Preface to the Reader* of *De Cive*, Thomas Hobbes gives a brief account of the history of civil science or political philosophy.²⁰⁶ This history of civil science can be broken into 4 stages: The Golden Age, Socrates Time, Post-Socratic Time and the age which for the first time has available “the royal road to peace” (*De Cive*, p 10).²⁰⁷

The first stage was pre-Socratic and in this time the “holy mystery of government” was protected from public debate. The ancients of the golden age only taught through “the shadowy lines of allegory” preferring “that the knowledge of Justice be wrapped in fables rather than exposed to discussion.” Government and justice were not discussed openly and for this reason reverence for Government was preserved. The public discussion and debate of Government undermines Government, and so the ancients wisely left their political teachings hidden in fables. In this age Hobbes says:

“Before questions of this kind began to be debated, Princes did not lay claim to sovereign power, they simply exercised it. They did not defend their power by arguments but by punishing the wicked and defending the good. In return the citizens did not measure Justice by comments of private men but by the laws of the commonwealth; and were kept at peace not by discussions but by the power of the commonwealth. In fact, they revered the sovereign power, whether it resided in a man or assembly, as a kind of visible divinity” (*De Cive*, p 9).

²⁰⁶ All references to *De Cive* will be cited in text as follows: (*De Cive*, p X). All references are to: Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, edited and translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge, UK: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). All references to *Leviathan* will be cited as follows: (Part.chapter.paragraph). The Introduction will be cited as (Intro, paragraph) and the Review and Conclusion will be cited as (R&C. paragraph). All references are to: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: with selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*, edited with introduction and notes by Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994).

²⁰⁷ It was not until later, in the prefatory material to *De Corpore*, where Hobbes announces his work *De Cive* to be the first work worthy of the title political science.

Hobbes provides an interpretation of two fables, which are meant to demonstrate the dangers of public discussion of government.

The first fable outlines the end of the Golden Age where natural philosophy prospered alongside esoteric discussions of justice, “it was peace there, and a Golden Age, which did not end until Saturn was expelled and the doctrine started up that one could take up arms against kings” (*De Cive*, p 9). The removal of Saturn marks the fall from the Golden Age. The Age which proceeded the Golden Age was the time of Socrates. Socrates, Hobbes informs us, was “the first to fall in love with this civil science, showing a bit of itself through the Clouds in the matter of civil government” (*De Cive*, p 7). After Socrates, who rejected all other forms of philosophy, judging them not worthy of his intellect, the later Greeks, the Romans, and finally all philosophers and then even gentlemen in their leisure hours, from all nations, attempted to possess this ‘holy mystery of government.’ Bacon as we saw, argued for a similar development, though Bacon argued that what the many philosophers were enamoured of was moral philosophy, not the holy mystery of government.

Hobbes’ presentation posits the following regarding the influence of Socrates and his followers: Public discussion and debate of Government is pernicious because it undermines the veneration which the Government requires for rule. Debate and discussion undermine veneration of Government because this debate must expose the rational grounds of government’s authority. Once the rational ground for Government’s authority is exposed, there is also a justification for removing Governments which violate or undermine that ground. Civil war is possible because of this problematic. Hobbes’ political philosophy attempts to address this problematic by ostensibly presenting an

argument which suggests that any government is better than civil war. With this argument, Hobbes grounds the first true and legitimate political science. It is true and legitimate because it can be both profitably taught openly and it doesn't undermine the authority of Governments.

Parallel to this time, when the mystery of royal authority was only taught esoterically, other philosophers, to the advantage of mankind, investigated motions and natural causes. Hobbes praises the era as a golden age. Knowledge of nature flourished while commonwealths enjoyed peace.

It is Socrates, or rather his followers, who in bringing philosophy 'down from the heavens and into the cities' opened the way to civil war and sedition. Unlike Bacon, who seemed to want to undermine the importance of Socrates for understanding the history of philosophy, Hobbes places him at the pivotal point. Socrates brought civil philosophy from the shadows of allegory and aphorism into the marketplace. The effect of this was two fold. First, knowledge of politics was considered to be more important than all other knowledge, which drew the philosophical and even gentlemen into the debates regarding civil matters. This in turn caused the effect discussed in the fable above. On this account Hobbes is implicitly charging Socrates with being responsible for thousands of years of sedition, civil war and regicide.

There is also a second charge, implicit in Hobbes account, that more closely parallels the millennia long shift in the sciences away from natural philosophy discussed by Bacon. Hobbes does not develop this charge to the degree which Bacon did, which we explored in the previous chapter. However, we can see that Hobbes intends to model his

presentation in *De Cive* on that in the *New Organon*. The parallels of Hobbes' mini-history of political science to Bacon's account of the history of philosophy are sufficient to see that Hobbes means to invoke Baconian science.

Should this be insufficient, Hobbes provides an interpretation of a fable, a favourite practice of Bacon's to reveal ancient and forgotten teachings, to further demonstrate his argument regarding post - Socratic philosophy. After delivering the historical version of the development of political science, Hobbes gives his reader a mythical account. It comprises only a line of text but becomes important for deciphering Hobbes' interpretation of the fable of Ixion. In Hobbes' mythical account it is the murder of Saturn by Jupiter which marks the mythical end of the golden age and account of how the science of government became publicly debated. Jupiter's usurpation of Saturn, Hobbes argues, marked the end of the golden age with the establishment of the doctrine that "one could take up arms against kings." Since Hobbes cites Socrates as the first to esteem that the science of government was worthy of his intellect, we are invited to hypothesise that Socrates' name should be substituted for Jupiter, for it was Socrates' act which ended the golden age in Hobbes' historical account. The question remains, how can Socrates be understood to have done this, and who or what would represent Saturn? What did Socrates expel or usurp? Strictly following the historical analogy, Socrates usurps the authority of the natural sciences and the authority of the ancients in concealing the art of government from public debate. The golden age was golden because of prospering natural science and a concealed, and therefore, harmless, political science. Socrates is responsible not for the doctrine that arms can be taken up against kings, but for becoming the model of an intellectual revolutionary. From the perspective of the regime, Socrates

died in a glorious fashion so that philosophy could be openly established in the regime. Socrates' followers, especially Plato and Aristotle, made this a reality through the Academy. The regime was no longer the only judge of Good. Socrates' death brought the tension between philosophy and politics into the open. Hobbes argues that this tension should be concealed, and it is the responsibility of philosophy to make the necessary compromises. In the golden age this compromise was that political philosophers would conceal their teachings.

Hobbes continues by introducing an interpretation of the fable of Ixion, which is supposed to demonstrate that the ancients knew the dangers of allowing open debate about politics. I will quote Hobbes' presentation and exposition of the fable in full.

“This I say the ancients not only have seen, but to have very aptly symbolized in one of their fables. They say that Ixion was invited by Jupiter to a banquet, he fell in love with Juno herself and harassed her. In place of the Goddess, a cloud as offered to him in the form of Juno. From the Cloud were born centaurs, partly human in nature, partly horses, a belligerent and restless race. Change the names, and it is as if they had said that private men, summoned to Councils on the highest questions of state, attempted to subject Justice, the sister and wife of sovereign Power, to their own understanding, but embracing a false and empty semblance of her like a cloud, have generated ambivalent dogmas of moral philosophers, partly correct and attractive, partly brutal and irrational, the causes of many quarrels and killings” (*De Cive*, p 9).

Hobbes interpretation must be rethought with regard to his first account of how private men came to believe they could enter public debates about justice. First it is worthy of note that it was Jupiter who invited Ixion to the banquet. On the terms of Hobbes' analogy, Sovereign power invited private men to the councils of state, and when they arrived, they behaved like poor guests by inappropriately addressing questions of justice, causing great harm to the commonwealth. The fable is meant to serve as warning to

sovereigns to refrain from admitting private men to the business of state. But, this is not all the fable shows for Hobbes has given us an historical account of how the narrative of the fable actually came to be. It was Socrates, “who is said to be have been the first to fall in love with this civil science, showing a bit of itself through the Clouds in the matter of civil government.” Since it was Ixion, invited by the Sovereign to the council of state who feel in love with Justice but instead embraced a cloud, can we not surmise that Ixion represents Socrates (and his followers)? I include his followers because as I have cited above it is perhaps not Socrates as much as it was his followers that caused the greatest damage by inappropriately ‘falling in love with science’ and pursing justice. However, it is hard not to consider that Socrates may in a sense be culpable in Hobbes’ judgment. Though Socrates submitted to the Sovereign power, his courage and the way he conducted himself at this trial made him a hero, whom others emulated. In the historical version of the fall from the golden age it was really Socrates’ example which caused the problem.²⁰⁸

The fable also concedes that the doctrines generated by the emulators of Socrates in their wooing of justice are not wholly false, but ambivalent. They ‘are half human, half beast’. They are partly attractive and correct, partly brutal and irrational. It is this mix of the human and the beast which is the problem.²⁰⁹ Hobbes’ ambition is to provide a completely human, which is to say, rational, ground for law.

²⁰⁸ This is further highlighted when we consider that it was Socrates who usurped the authority the authority of Saturn. In a sense it is Socrates as philosophy, who invites the common man to the banquet where he assaults the wife and sister of philosophy, Justice.

²⁰⁹ Hobbes appears to make a criticism of Machiavelli’s explicit teaching about the two kinds of combat or arms in the *Prince*. See Machiavelli, *Prince*, chapter 12, p 48 with chapter 18, pp 69-70.

De Cive, and Hobbes political philosophy as a whole, in sense is a return to the Golden Age and in a sense a continuation of the Socratic tradition. For, and this is much clearer in *Leviathan*, and perhaps is only realised in *Leviathan*, he wants to restore the commonwealth as a 'visible divinity' as it was in the golden age. Hobbes also, and this is accomplished in *De Cive*, and claimed again in *De Corpore*, provide the true science of justice which can be publicly taught. And as the title of the *De Cive* suggests, following the laws generated by the science of justice will make good citizens. My reading also suggests that *De Cive* is in fact a less completely realised version of Hobbes' intention. It is only with his work regarding the Mortal God, *Leviathan* that the reverence experienced in the golden age can return.

4.3 History of Philosophy in Leviathan

One of the differences between *De Cive* and *Leviathan* as presentations of Hobbes' political philosophy is the difference in their presentation of the history of political philosophy. While *De Cive* is prefaced by an account of its relationship to the history of political philosophy, this account is left to the 46th and penultimate chapter of *Leviathan*. The chapter is perhaps predictably located in the section of *Leviathan* dedicated to the Kingdom of Darkness and is entitled 'Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions.'

In keeping with Hobbes' presentation of the State of Nature in *Leviathan*, Hobbes makes no explicit reference to an ancient golden age. Socrates is also moved from any position of significance and is only mentioned in a parenthetical remark regarding Aristotle's

sincerity in arguing for ‘separated essences’ (4.46.18)²¹⁰. Hobbes goes so far in *Leviathan* as to place the origin of philosophy prior to Greeks, in the traditions of the “Gymnosophists of India, the Magi of Persia and the priests of Chaldea and Egypt” (4.46.6). It rose in these nations first, Hobbes argues, because ‘leisure is the mother of philosophy; and the commonwealth of peace and leisure’ (4.46.6). The early Greeks did not know peace, and therefore did not know philosophy until the mutual fear between the Greek cities was established. The seven wise men of Greece earned their reputation for wisdom, it seems for some of them, legitimately, for their ‘moral and politic sentences’ and from their import of Egyptian knowledge of math and geometry. This was prior to the introduction of schools of philosophy and it is schools of philosophy which take the brunt of Hobbes’ attack in Chapter 46.

Hobbes gives a geopolitical reason for the rise of philosophy in Greece. It was the defeat of the Persians by the Athenians and the pursuant dominion of the sea which precipitated a desire for the “*telling and hearing of news* or in discoursing in philosophy publicly to the youth of the city began” (4.46.7). This is consistent with the view presented earlier in the *Protagoras*. Hippocrates was so moved by the news of the wisest sophist coming to Athens that he could not sleep. As Callias’ house demonstrates, it is necessary to have a place in which this discussion can take place. To teach, it is necessary to have some privacy from undiscerning ears, who may misunderstand one’s teaching. Private households soon became public buildings dedicated to philosophy. So starting with the Greeks, who were followed by the rest of the civilized world, public places were erected to house the public teaching of the youth. After examining the philosophy of the Grecian

²¹⁰ This is the only explicit reference to Socrates in *Leviathan*.

schools, Hobbes concludes that there “natural philosophy was more a dream than science”, their moral philosophy merely “a description of their own passions” and their logic “is but captions of words, and inventions how to puzzle such as should go about to pose them” (4.46.11). To conclude, Hobbes cites Cicero: “There is nothing so absurd that the old philosophers have not some of them maintained” (4.46.11). Hobbes has maintained his agreement with Bacon that the schools of philosophy have been ineffective in being able to pass useful philosophy from generation to generation. For Hobbes, as for Bacon, utility is the criterion of judgment for public science. In Hobbes’s succinct Baconian formulation of the ends of science: “reason is the pace; increase of science, the way; and the benefit of mankind, the end” (1.5.20).

The history of philosophy in *Leviathan* aims to demonstrate that any success in philosophy is attributable to the commonwealth. In fact, Hobbes’ argument as a whole in *Leviathan* appears to ask his reader to: think of any and all goods you enjoy. And attempts to show how they are only possible with the *Leviathan*. The corollary of the often quoted paragraph 9 of Chapter 13 is that *Leviathan* makes possible all industry, agriculture, navigation, trade, construction, account of time, the arts, philosophy and society.

Hobbes in *Leviathan* makes very little reference to the relationship between fables as a method of disguising political philosophy from public discourse.²¹¹ However, his entire work is entitled *Leviathan*, a reference to the book of Job. In a sense Hobbes’ entire work

²¹¹ With that said there are important exceptions where he does make this argument using ‘apt similitude’s.’ An important point regarding the comparison between the works considered in this study is Hobbes’ discussion of Prometheus in Chapter 1.12.5. Howell, *Seeds of Religion*, 93-127.

On the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil” is an interpretation of the Book of Job.²¹²

In fact, in his chapter *Of Punishment and Rewards* Hobbes gives us an explicit reason for his chosen title.

“Hitherto I have set forth the nature of Man, whose Pride and other Passions have compelled him to submit himself to government, together with the great power of his governor, whom I compared to *Leviathan*, taking that comparison out of the two last verses of the one and fortieth of Job, where God, having set forth the great power of *Leviathan*, calleth him King of the Proud. “There is nothing,” saith he, “on earth, to be compared with him. He is made so as not be afraid. He seeth every high thing below him, and is King of all the children of pride.” But because he is mortal, and subject to decay, as all other Earthly creatures are; and because there is that in heaven, (though not on earth) that he should stand in fear of, and whose Lawes he ought to obey; I shall in the next following Chapters speak of his Diseases, and the causes of his Mortality; and of what Laws of Nature he is bound to obey” (2.28.27).

The full meaning of this choice of title becomes clear in chapter 33 of *Leviathan*, in discussing *Of the Number, Antiquity, Scope, Authority, and Interpreters of Books of Holy Scripture*. There Hobbes states of the Book of Job that “the Book itself seemeth not to be a History, but a Treatise concerning a question in ancient time much disputed, “*why wicked men have often prospered in this world, and good men have been afflicted*” (3.33.12). Hobbes seems to want to put his *Leviathan* forward as the solution to this question much disputed in ancient times. Good men are those who follow the laws, and

²¹² In fact, Hobbes is conscious of being accused of presenting something as useless as other works of political philosophy as “Plato’s *Republic*, *Utopia* and *Atlantis*.” This is the Latin version of the famous passage from paragraph 41 of Chapter 31 at the end of part 2 of *Leviathan*.

wicked men are those who break them. Under the rule of the *Leviathan*, the Mortal God, who only answers to the Immortal God, is solely responsible for punishes and rewards.²¹³

The meaning of Hobbes' chosen title appears to be this. From the *Introduction* it is clear that man's art which creates *Leviathan* is superior to God's art which created man. God's most excellent work is man and *Leviathan*, though an artificial man, is of "greater stature and strength than the natural."

In the Book of Job, God challenges Job to prove he is worthy to judge God's judgment. The standard which God demands Job meet is to prove he has the power to create Behemoth and to treat *Leviathan* as a play thing. Job concedes to God's argument and declares: "I know that thou canst do every thing" (Job 42:2). If Man can create *Leviathan* does that not mean that he can judge God? If *Leviathan* is responsible for everything of importance to mankind, is not the *Leviathan* more important to man than God?²¹⁴ Are we not justified in speaking reverently of this creation? As Hobbes proclaims after explaining the genesis of commonwealth, "This is the generation of that great *Leviathan*, or (to speak more reverently) of that Mortal God to which we owe, under the Immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him by terror thereof he is enabled to conform the wills of them to peace at home and mutual aid abroad" (1.17.13).

²¹³ A consideration of 2.30.8-28 leaves one to believe that man should expect more from the *Leviathan* than the immortal god because of the immortal god it can only be said that he is "infinite, eternal and incomprehensible."

²¹⁴ Much of the arguments of parts 3 and 4 of *Leviathan* are dedicated to making this point in the context of the Christian Religion.

It is not too much of a stretch to say that the Leviathan is the most powerful thing on earth. Hobbes says: “The greatest of human powers is that which is the compounded powers of most men, united by consent in one person, natural or civil, that has the use of their powers depending on his will, such as is the power of commonwealth or depending on the wills of each particular, such as is the power of a faction or of divers factions leagued” (1.10.3).

The history of philosophy means less than political history in this context. The development of Greek philosophy through Roman and then Christian times means much less than whether commonwealths were able to establish sufficient peace and power in order to mother philosophy. Almost no account of past philosophy is required: that it was incapable of maintaining peace is sufficient for Hobbes’ argument. Regarding the natural sciences, and all science, it is sufficient to demonstrate the fruitlessness of past philosophy and to highlight that the new productive science will increase man’s power.²¹⁵

4.4 ‘King over all the Sons of Pride’²¹⁶

Like Bacon’s reform of the regime of the sciences, Hobbes’ reform of political regimes introduces a new equality. If all are equal, then Hobbes’ political science aims to teach everyone about their equality and the consequences of that equality in the absence of a

²¹⁵ Hobbes does exactly this in the prefatory material to his three part Elements of Philosophy.

²¹⁶ This section of the thesis is based on my paper: Graham Howell, “Hobbes’ Pedagogy: the Portrait of the Potential Hobbesean” presented at the 2007 MPSA Conference.

commonly recognized power. Hobbes' philosophy would appear to aim for universal enlightenment for the sake of the peace and safety of all.²¹⁷

To understand Hobbes' pedagogy is to understand how it is possible to attain universal enlightenment. Universal enlightenment posits that what was true about Plato's Cave, which depicts the enlightenment of one individual, is true or possible of an entire people, if not the entire human race.²¹⁸ Some scholars such as M. Kraynak in *History and Modernity in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes*, have argued that Hobbes had a view of history which grounds the possibility of the success of his Leviathan. In Kraynak's case, Hobbes' political science is based on the struggle between barbarism and civilization; though this account contributes to our understanding of Hobbes, it does not make clear to my mind the exact character of this universal enlightenment.²¹⁹

Other scholars have recently paid attention to the role which rhetoric plays in Hobbes' political philosophy. Perhaps the most well known is David Johnston's book *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, which looks at the arguments made in *Leviathan*, not only as propositions regarding the truth about politics, but as political acts themselves.²²⁰ In this way he argues that the *Leviathan* presents a politics of cultural transformation and

²¹⁷ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p 198. See also David Johnston's *Rhetoric of Leviathan*. I find Johnston's overall approach to be very valuable, especially his argument that the Leviathan attempts to *do something* with its presentation, not just present an account which is meant to be judged. I think this is confirmed by the last paragraph of the Introduction to *Leviathan*. I will cite other evidence which works from the Johnston's basic premise throughout the text. Cite Johnston.

²¹⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, through his *Phenomenology of Spirit* sets out to prove that this kind of universal enlightenment was possible. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* argues that this enlightenment was possible through the development of Spirit in History. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by Miller, A.V., with analysis of the text and foreword by Findlay, J.N. (Oxford University Press, USA (February 1, 1979).

²¹⁹ See Robert P. Kraynak, *History and Modernity in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp 187-216.

²²⁰ David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), pp xv-xx.

attempts to affect that transformation. Once the arguments of *Leviathan* are viewed in this way, a much richer and more dynamic view of nature is uncovered behind the view of Hobbesian man as a relentless power seeker. Both of these approaches to Hobbes investigate what Hobbes actually says in *Leviathan* about how he thinks the proposals he argues for should be put into action.

Hobbes, in the central chapter of *Leviathan*, *Of the Kingdom of God by Nature*, worries that his philosophy will be as useless as the commonwealth of Plato.²²¹

“For he also is of the opinion that it is impossible for disorders of the state, and change of governments by civil war, ever to be taken away, till sovereigns be philosophers” (*Leviathan* (Lev. 2.31.41).

He then argues that his presentation of the science of natural justice is all that is necessary for sovereigns and their principle ministers to know and that his presentation is “short, and [he] think[s] clear” (2.31.41). Though this *seems* to show that Hobbes is not aiming at universal enlightenment it does show that he believes that his teaching can be transformed from “truth of speculation into the utility of practice” by those who wield sovereign power.²²² With that said, it does not follow that the teachings of *Leviathan* cannot be delivered in some form to the many, and that this might be necessary to put Hobbes’ political science into action. In fact, Hobbes himself defends this view when speaking against an unnamed ‘they,’ who argue Hobbes’ philosophy is impossible because of the capacities of the vulgar. He states:

²²¹ Please see W. R. Mathie’s “‘till sovereigns be philosophers’: Politics and Philosophy in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*” Presented at Canadian Political Science Association annual meeting in Toronto, 2002. Dr. Mathie’s article examines this claim relative to the additions Hobbes has made to *Leviathan* when compared to his earlier works to pin down the ground on which Hobbes’ entertains this new hope.

²²² It is interesting to note that as Bacon dedicated his *New Organon* to King James, Hobbes’ wanted to dedicate the *Leviathan* to King Charles.

“But all men know that the obstructions in this kind of doctrine proceed not so much from the difficulty of the matter, as from the interest of them that are to learn....the mind’s of common men, unless they are tainted with dependence on the potent, or scribbled over with the opinions of doctors, are like clean paper, fit to receive whatsoever by public authority shall be imprinted in them” (1.30.60).

There are two sections of *Leviathan* which argue for the equality of mankind: Chapter 13, *On the Natural Condition of Mankind Concerning their Felicity and Misery* and the *Introduction*. The fact these are the only two sections of *Leviathan* that start with the word Nature suggests that they must be considered together when deciphering Hobbes’ view of nature and his pedagogical approach. The third paragraph of the *Introduction* argues that wisdom is acquired by reading oneself to discover the similitude of the passions of all men. Hobbes’ argues that the objects of the passions ought not to be considered because the designs of men are too difficult to decipher without the key, which is the proper understanding of the passions. Hobbes asks that we study “what [we] doth, when [we] *think, opine, reason, hope, fear &c.*” (Intro, 3). This section seems to argue that all men are equal because all men have the same passions and it takes only effort and reflection to know the passions *per se* and in each circumstance, which provides the key to knowing all men.

In the next paragraph Hobbes’ states:

“He that is to rule a govern a whole nation must read in himself, not this or that particular man, but mankind, which though it be hard to do, harder to learn than any language or science, yet when I shall have set down my own reading orderly and perspicuously, the pains left another will be only to consider if he also find not the same in himself. For this kind of doctrine admitteth no other demonstration” (Intro, 4).

Hobbes discovers the following when he presents his view about hope and fear, the passions which he will argue ground the establishment of the sovereign. He says:

“The passions which incline men to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and the a hope by their industry to obtain them” (1.13.14).

The vital question, from a pedagogical point of view, and from the point of view of the success of Hobbes’ political philosophy, is whether the fear, desire and hope cited above exist among human nature in sufficient portion to make peace possible, should a sovereign become a philosopher. If the passions of peace are rare among men, then the rule portrayed in Chapters 11 and 12, which is to say rule of the ambitious through military strength, the ignorance of those predisposed to trust authority combined with outward acts of good will, will persist. And should this rule persist, the life of man would perhaps not be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” as it would be ignorant and slavish (1.13.9)..

Hobbes is hopeful that an enlightened sovereign will be able to change the historically demonstrable instability of regimes. It is obvious then, that Hobbes’ political science is aimed at educating the sovereign. The question is now what happens once a sovereign and his principle ministers have learned what *Leviathan* has to teach. Hobbes himself claims ignorance about how the world²²³ will receive his doctrine.

In a way to state the question like this is to ask what Hobbes asks at the beginning: his account must be judged against his readers’ understanding of human nature. Its success will be determined by how many people are convinced to view the political authority the

²²³ It is interesting to note that Hobbes wishes to give his teaching to the world, not just England. In this connection Hobbes seems to intend that his doctrine spread across the entire globe in 2.30.19 when he says “The multitude of poor (and yet strong) people still increasing, they are transplanted into countries no sufficiently inhabited, where, nevertheless, they are not to exterminate those they find there, but to constrain them to inhabit closer together, and not range a great deal of grant to snatch what they find, but to court them each little plot with art and labour, to give them their sustenance in due season. And when all the world is overcharged with inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is war, which provideth for every man, victory or death”.

way Hobbes' political science presents it. With that said we can examine Hobbes' account for clues regarding how he believes his account will be taken. This is not to say that Hobbes' is being disingenuous when he states he doesn't know how the world will receive his teaching, because the truth of his account can be only tested by its success.

Hobbes is clear that he is endeavouring to "advance the civil power." He believes this should not be condemned by the civil power, whose interests his book would seem to serve. Nor should his book be decried by private men who believe that the defence of the civil power makes the civil power's authority too great. Hobbes' argument for the first is plain, but his second is obscure. Is it going to appear that the liberty of private men is threatened by Hobbes' account of authority? After reading *Leviathan* we can see that Hobbes' account gives the maximum allowable liberty to subjects, which is not contradictory to the interests of national security and civil defence. In short, Hobbes does not seem to believe that his account ought to be considered repugnant to the interests of either sovereigns or subjects.²²⁴ If Hobbes' argument can prove this to even the 'meanest capacity' then his teaching would be enlightening in the sense that to properly understand one's self interest is to be enlightened.²²⁵

That Hobbes believes the minds of most men are like clean paper already implies that he takes a 'top-down' view of how civil doctrines are disseminated in political life. In general, opinions must be defended by authorities recognized by the many, before the many will hold them to be true. In Hobbes' time the two most authoritative institutions

²²⁴ Hobbes is clear, at least in *Leviathan* that there will be those among religious authorities who will believe that Hobbes is using scripture in a novel way, by which he perhaps means heretically.

²²⁵ I say this with due submission to the view that many of the claims which seem to make this consensus about self-interest possible have a rhetorical character which provides an important caveat when assessing the worth of the kind of enlightenment Hobbes' political teaching offers.

regarding civil doctrine were the church and the university. Hobbes makes it clear that the best place to begin disseminating his teaching is through the universities. In the *Review and Conclusion* he states that he believes the *Leviathan* could be profitably taught in universities (R&C, 16).

“For seeing Universities are the fountains of civil and moral doctrine...And by that means the most men, knowing their duties, will be less subject to serve ambition of a few discontented persons in their purposes against the state, and be less grieved with the contributions necessary for their peace and defence, and governments themselves have the less cause to maintain at the common charge any greater army than is necessary to make good the public safety against invasions and encroachments of foreign enemies” (R&C, 16).

In Chapter 30 of *Leviathan*, which is entitled *Of the Office of the Sovereign Representative*, Hobbes states that the end of the commonwealth is the ‘safety of the people,’ by which is not meant “bare preservation, but also other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire himself” (2.30.1). To this end Hobbes outlines a version of his political philosophy as a set of laws or rules, which are to secure the above stated end of the commonwealth and are modeled on the Decalogue. (2.30.7-13), the argument implicitly being that if the many can learn and follow the Decalogue they can learn and follow the teachings of his political philosophy.

This is in spite of any argument one might wish to make about the capacity of the vulgar. Hobbes himself admits that the greatest part of mankind is dominated by sensual desire which diverts them from the deep meditation required to know the truth. Hobbes argues that the greatest part of mankind are concerned solely with their labour and trade (either through necessity or covetousness), or they are driven by sloth (2.30.14). If the minds of

the many are like clean paper, and their inclinations, if not their condition, prevent them from learning the science of natural justice, then Hobbes argues that the best hope relies “on the right teaching of youth in universities” (2.30.14). Hobbes seems to place his best hope on educating the future ruling class.

But if this future ruling class read and learned all of Hobbes’ works, will they not pride themselves on their possession of the true political science? It seems clear that an Alcibiades would. However, Hobbes is famous for arguing for equality and does not his argument for equality undermine the whole project? Hobbes, after-all believes he has discovered political science for the first time and what is required is that this science be known by those in power. Hobbes’ political philosophy teaches that they will be the first to rule following the science of politics.²²⁶ At minimum, must not those in power believe in their hearts that they know more than the vulgar about administering the commonwealth for the “safety of the public”? This would make Hobbes’ rhetorical claim to equality nothing more than a noble lie, or worse an insidious deception to threaten the liberty of citizens.

We now must turn more directly to Hobbes arguments for equality. The argument for equality of nature is made in two parts: equality of body and equality of mind. The argument for equality of body is that all are equally mortal. Everyone can be killed. If one were to believe oneself immune Hobbes is quick to point out, perhaps thinking of Julius Caesar²²⁷ that “the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secrete

²²⁶ This observation is perhaps partly a solution to Oakshott’s account of the problems surround the “first performer” of the covenant. See Michael Oakshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association*. Forward by Paul Franco. (Indianapolis, Ind: Liberty Fund Inc, 1937), 139-140.

²²⁷ See 1.2.7 and 1.11.20.

machinations, or by confederacy, with others that are in the same danger with himself” (1.13.1). Though Hobbes is correct that everyone is mortal and in that sense equal, people confront their mortality in diverse ways. For example, some may prefer death to dishonour, while others may wish to cling to life at the cost of their honour. To know that fear is “an aversion with the opinion of hurt” does not determine what opinions one will hold about what it is to be hurt. If Hobbes is correct, however, that most are driven by their sensual desires, it is reasonable to assume that most will agree that all are equal because they are mortal.

When Hobbes turns to the equality of the mind he finds an even greater equality. Hobbes states immediately that his judgement sets asides the arts based on words, which very few have and in a few things. Hobbes is correct that science is neither native to the human mind, nor is it like his prudence which is acquired through experience. But one must ask what Hobbes’ believes is required of a mind to possess the skill which is based on the infallible rules called science?²²⁸ Be that as it may, if one were inclined to believe that having acquired a science made one superior this would be but “a vain conceit of one’s own wisdom.” Given no one would believe that there is another so wise than himself, one must assume the equality of the mind because “there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of anything than that every man is contented with his share” (1.13.2). This argument as much demonstrates that men are equally vain about their faculties of mind as it does that their faculties of mind are equal. It is improbable to expect to be able to establish political rule based on the proclamation that wisdom generates the right to

²²⁸ His political point is, of course, that without a stable commonwealth the conditions under which one can improve one’s mind does not exist. Before civil society, in the state of nature, mind’s men are equal. Any inequality between minds is grounded in the commonwealth.

rule. Implicit in Hobbes own account then there are significant inequalities among human nature. Hobbes seems to divide human nature into three broad camps. The largest camp is composed of two parts: the one camp keeps their attention “to their trades and labour”, while the other camp, due to sloth, “carrieth after their sensual pleasures” (2.30.14). As whole this group does not present a large pedagogical challenge. As cited above, unlike the rich and learned, the minds of the vulgar are like clean paper fit to receive “whatsoever by public authority shall be imprinted on them” (2.30.6). More than this, the passions of these men already dispose them to a common power (1.11.4 and 1.13.14).

What remains are the two rare types of men. The first are those who possess the qualities, whatever they may be, to become philosophers. The second are those men who would prefer death to dishonour. I will leave consideration of philosophers and ignorance of causes aside except to say that “Men that have a strong opinion of their own wisdom in matter of government are disposed to ambition, because without public employment in council or magistracy the honour of their wisdom is lost” (1.11.13). For Hobbes’ *Leviathan* to succeed as a reading of mankind which provides the knowledge necessary to govern a nation Hobbes’ philosopher-sovereigns must learn humility²²⁹

The second type of man can be characterised as the proud. It is this type of man, not the vulgar or the wise, with whom the Leviathan, that king over all the sons of pride, is particularly concerned.

Hobbes’ analysis of the proud concludes that the proud seek recognition for their power. “Honourable is whatsoever possession, action or quality is an argument and sign of

²²⁹ Four of the 19 or 20 national laws deal with the pride of the ruler. C.f. (1.15.16-23).

power” (1.10.37). It follows immediately from the above that the person who holds the sovereign power will be the most honourable because they hold the greatest power. Who then has the ambition to strive to hold this greatest power?

With this question we come to what I believe is the limitation of the view that the fear of violent death is central to Hobbes’ political philosophy. This argument works well in accounting for how most of mankind can be motivated to follow Hobbes’ natural laws. But someone or some assembly needs to be sovereign. Recall the sovereign is not party to the covenant and is still in the state of nature, where “everyone has a right to everything.” Being an Hobbesean sovereign is dangerous, if all are ruled by the fear of violent death, what would compel a man to purposely take on the responsibility of governing the commonwealth in the state of nature which exists between nations?²³⁰

Chapters 11 and 12 are mainly dedicated to outlining the nature of governorship prior to the science of natural justice (and the development of natural science).²³¹ Chapter 11 outlines men’s Manners and is an analysis of how the various desires are amenable to peace and how various qualities can lend men to subject themselves to a ruler. Chapter 12, *Of Religion*, outlines a kind of rule based on the exploitation of the ignorance of causes. Baconian science, outlined in the early books of *Leviathan*, provides the scientific ground which will make this kind of rule based on ignorance less likely. The political output of Hobbes’ materialism is that it is a completely de-mystified view of nature. These two chapters furnish many good candidates whose desires seem to be such that the

²³⁰ An interesting solution to this problem can be found in Republic when Glaucon and Socrates talk about the wages of the best. *Republic of Plato*, 346d-348a.

²³¹ See Howell, Graham *Leviathan and the Seeds of Religion* (Brock University MA thesis, 2003), pp 64-92.

fear of death is not sufficient to keep them in check. The main contenders are those who could also become potential leaders and seek praise and fame after death and men who have a strong opinion of their own wisdom in government. This psychological make up combined with an ability for eloquence and flattery, which make one appear both wise and kind, combined with a reputation for military action, will incline men to “adhere and subject themselves” to a governor (1.11.16). As a whole these men will see these tendencies in the many and be “inclined thereby to nourish, dress, and form it into laws, and to add to it, of their own invention, any opinion of the causes of future events by which they thought they should best be able to govern others, and make unto themselves the greatest use of their power” (1.11.27).

As chapter 12 shows, there is much room to abuse the good will and ignorance of the many, which is generated by apparent wisdom and kindness and the speeches of malicious doctors. Hobbes’ political science, however, aims to temper opinions about the causes of future events and miracles with Baconian natural science. In this sense all are enlightened, in that their opinions are to be informed by science, not superstition. Once enlightened, it becomes more and more difficult for ambitious men to try and create faction using the tendencies of human nature discussed in chapters 11 and 12. This solution should be as appealing to those who would seek to embody the sovereign: a stable method of rule means less danger and more time to enjoy the benefits and honour of wielding power. And as all have a desire for power which never ceases due to the perpetual desire to assure the means to live well, kings “whose power is greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by laws or abroad by wars; and when that is done, there succeddeth a new desire, in some of fame from new conquest, in others of

ease and sensual pleasure, in others of admiration or being flattered for excellence in some art or other ability of mind” (1.11.2). The possibility that some kings may seek ease and sensual pleasure or honour for ability of mind suggests the division of nature which I have been outlining throughout this section of the thesis. It may be a hereditary king does not possess the qualities of eloquence or flattery, or even the military skill which naturally endear men to their governors. However, should a man more inclined to sensual delight or love of the arts become king he will find it necessary to secure his power, as those in poverty will find it necessary to labour in a trade. Hobbes’ *Leviathan* provides what is necessary in terms of instructing the many to obey the law, and gives the grounds of why this obedience will be satisfying to the ruled.

Hobbes’ account also presents a way where those inclined by their natural desires for praise, fame, and military honour can be satisfied, though they do represent a danger to the commonwealth. Hobbes devotes much of chapter 30, which discusses *The Office of the Sovereign Representative Government* to the threats of popular virtuous men. He is especially careful to give advice regarding the dangers and benefits of a popular military chief.

He casts his version of the first commandment (You shall have no other gods before Me) as advice about how to instruct the people against entertaining regime change with the hope of reform (2.30.70).

He casts his version of the second of the Ten Commandments (*Do not make a sculpted image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above*) as warning to the sovereign not to let any popular individual grab the attention of the public too firmly (2.30.8). Virtually

the entire discussion of Rewards is advice on how to deal with those who benefit the commonwealth (2.30.24).

He cast the third commandment (Do not swear falsely by the name of the LORD) as equivalent to those who speak evil of the sovereign.

The fourth commandment (Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy) is understood to command that the sovereign set aside time for the subjects to learn their duty for “seeing people cannot be taught this, nor when it is taught remember it, nor after one generation past so much as know in whom the sovereign power is placed, without setting apart their ordinary labour some certain times...[to] hear those duties told them, and the positive laws, such as generally concern them all, read and expounded, and be put in mind of the authority that maketh them law” (2.30.10).

The fifth commandment (Honor your father and your mother) is argued to be necessary as the father is the child’s first model of a sovereign (2.30.11).

The sixth through tenth commandments are all said to be covered through his teaching on justice.

As Hobbes’ version of the Decalogue shows, in combination with the arguments presented above, Hobbes intends the sovereign to quite literally take the role of a God. For this god to be king over the sons of pride he must satisfy those who desire honour. Accordingly the 12th and last right of the sovereign shows that:

“it is necessary that there be laws of honour, and a public rate of the worth of such men as have deserved or are able to deserve well of the Commonwealth, and that there be force in the hands of some or other to

put those laws in execution. But it hath already been shown that not only the whole militia, or forces of the Commonwealth, but also the judicature of all controversies, is annexed to the sovereignty. To the sovereign therefore it belonged also to give titles of honour, and to appoint what order of place and dignity each man shall hold, and what signs of respect in public or private meetings they shall give to one another" (2.18.15).

In addition to the above it is also useful if the sovereign is "popular (that is, *reverenced* and beloved of his people) here is no danger at all from the popularity of a subject" (2.30.29) (my emphasis).

It is worth noting that Hobbes also takes the time to comment on the state of international relations. It is instructive because he makes an analogy to the state of nature, from which the many who fear violent death come together to form the *Leviathan*. If the people are taught the state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" it is worth noting that the many, and those who aspire to embody the greatest power, know that the sovereign is capable of following the law of nations, which Hobbes assures us is the same of the law of nature where "every sovereign hath the same right, in procuring the safety of the people, that nay particular man have, in procuring the safety of his own body" (2.30.30). Absent a world Government which can keep all the nations in awe, the sovereign must not only possess the science of natural justice, but also the virtues of war, force and fraud.

But Hobbes' goes further than suggesting that a sovereign is required to exercise and must be capable of exercising the virtues of war. If the *Leviathan* is a mortal god, then international politics is the politics between the mortal gods. Peace between nations is peace among the gods; war between nations is war among the gods. To represent the authority of the commonwealth, to be sovereign of a commonwealth and thus to be responsible for relationships to other commonwealths, is the same as to be invited to the

banquet of the gods. As the Homeric Poems show, there is great human suffering when the gods war, but there is also great glory to be won.²³² Hobbes' sovereign must be wise and capable of war because the Hobbesean sovereign must be capable of being a mortal god.

I believe I have given enough evidence to make plausible my contention that the *Leviathan*, contrary to its arguments for equality, actually addresses at least three different groups of human beings: the many, those who desire wisdom, and those who desire honour. It is central to Hobbes' *Leviathan* that the power of the sovereign be understood to be Godlike. This does not mean the sovereign is a despot. For the Hobbesean sovereign knows that this power comes from the consent of the people and he knows he ought to be grateful for that power (1.15.16). The need for this power derives from those who seek honour, fame and glory for they are the ones who are responsible for organizing faction and rebellion. If even the proud can be awed by the Mortal God, they may sooner see that the greater honour is in serving the state, not opposing it.

With this we can see that the aim of *Leviathan* is not simply universal enlightenment, which can be achieved in a certain sense through the teaching of the natural laws and the view of nature portrayed by Baconian science. However, not all minds are like clean paper and not all men fear violent death above all else. Some of these proud seek honour or riches and the Godlike power of the sovereign is meant for them to see that the sovereign is the most worthy authority to dispense honour and recognition. Others are proud of their opinion of their own wisdom in government. Hobbes shows them first they

²³² It is interesting in this connection to note that Hobbes spent his final years translating the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* into English.

must contend with his *Leviathan* if they think they have read mankind sufficiently to rule a nation and second they must serve *Leviathan* to gain honour for their wisdom.

4.5 Conclusion: Hobbes and Protagoras: men of motion.

As a conclusion to this section I will aim to show that Hobbes' *Leviathan*, though based on the ontological principles of the primordial ontology and similar to Protagoras' account of politics, is more like Plato's *Republic* and the other dialogues in being an improvement on the Protagorean or primordial account.²³³

Protagoras argued, much like Hobbes, that nature cannot be understood to be a positive standard, but is a negative standard, which must be overcome. Man without law is wild and dangerous to his fellow man. On Protagoras' account he is unjust; Hobbes is more radical and argues that the words of just and unjust have no meaning without law. For both, art, convention and law are man's greatest benefactors. Art surpasses nature in both accounts and in both accounts, art suggests to mankind the need to build a political association. Both men argue that justice is grounded in the law. Both men also argue that courage is necessary to defend the commonwealth in war. This is more a problem for Hobbes than Protagoras, who praises courage as one of the highest virtues. But Hobbes does pass the 20th law of nature, which states: "that everyman is bound by nature, as much as in him lieth, to protect in war the authority by which he is himself protected in peace" (R&C, 5). Both men seem to argue that there are a set of virtues or qualities required to be ruled and there are a separate set for those required to rule.

²³³ Strauss has an extended discussion of what Hobbes' political philosophy owes to Platonic political philosophy. See Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and its Genesis*, translated from the German manuscript by Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 138-170.

Though Hobbes and Protagoras both argue that the origin of the commonwealth lay in the necessity to protect mankind, Hobbes is explicit that this is the sole legitimate end of the commonwealth. Protagoras is much more ambiguous. The ambiguity comes from Protagoras' view that courage and wisdom are virtues which are separate from justice and moderation. Protagoras gives no rational ground to curb hubristic political ambitions. The rulers of cities ascend to their place because they are naturally suited to rule, naturally suited because they are the strongest and they possess the best natural and conventional gifts. Nature on Protagoras' terms has given them licence to do what they can, and convention suggests they must appear just and moderate.

This same charge cannot be made against Hobbes for it is not nature which legitimates rule but the consent of the governed. As cited above, a combination of natural and acquired characteristics make rule easier, but do not legitimate rule. Leviathan is authorised by his subjects and derives its power from his subjects. A governor who understands the basis of his power will not undermine that basis. Thinking of the frontispiece piece to *Leviathan*, it would be absurd for him to undermine that basis and it is in his interest to secure his entire commonwealth, even if it is for his own fame. The image suggests that if his subjects are hurt, he is hurt. This is very different from Protagoras where there is no account of obligation of the rulers to the ruled.

Hobbes and Protagoras' account of political leadership are substantially different. The threat of tyranny is far less impending after a closer look at Hobbes' political philosophy than after a closer look at Protagoras' political philosophy. With that said, both Hobbes and Protagoras do not recognize any importance difference in how regimes are ruled. Hobbes only recognizes the difference between the number of people (one, few, many)

hold the sovereignty of the commonwealth. Hobbes makes an argument from expediency, which he admits is not demonstrated to the same precision as the rest of political philosophy, that monarchy, the rule of one, is better than other forms of rule. With that said he completely rejects that there could be a difference between kingship and tyranny. The question for Hobbes is not so much whether bad rule exists, his Leviathan provides a standard of good rule, which to violate would be bad rule, but the question turns on *who* is to say it is bad rule. The question of the ranking of regimes can become politically pernicious.²³⁴

A last point of comparison between Protagoras' and Hobbes' political philosophy is whether Hobbes' political philosophy can be reduced to the principles of the hedonistic calculus in the same way in which Protagoras' political philosophy can be reduced. The tension in Protagoras' account of political philosophy is that he believed there were noble and base pleasures, but he could not account for them. This prevented Protagoras from giving an account of why he thought courage and wisdom were higher virtues than justice, moderation and piety.

Hobbes makes no pretension of trying to rank virtues. He makes it clear that the study of the natural laws generates the virtues and they are "Justice, Equity, and all habits of the mind that conduce to Peace and Charity" (2.36.37). As the laws of nature are generated from the fear of violent death there is a unity to the virtues in Hobbes' account.

²³⁴ See Hobbes' account in 1.19.1-3. See also William Mathie, "Justice and the Question of Regimes in Ancient and Modern Political Philosophy: Aristotle and Hobbes" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 9, No. 3 (Sep., 1976), pp. 449-463.

Regarding pleasure, Hobbes gives a three part account of pleasure and the good, which establishes that the pleasures which lead to bodily health are the highest good. The account is contained in the densely packed paragraphs 8-12 of chapter 6 and mirrors Glaucon's account of the good at the beginning of book two of *Republic*. Hobbes, perhaps employing his Prodician skill, uses Latin terms to make his distinctions. Goods in promise are called *pulchrum*, goods in effect are *jucundum* (delights) and goods as means are called *utile*. Pleasure or delight from appetites is caused by affects which help or fortify vital motion. Vital motion was earlier described as the motions within the body which we associate with the body (e.g. breathing and digesting). So *jucundum* or delights are in fact the appearance or sense of a good. If pleasure is the appearance of a good, an actual good would be one which fortifies or helps the vital motions of the body. Illicit drugs or alcohol only seem to fortify the vital motions, while a healthy meal does fortify the vital motions. If fear of violent death is the *summum malum* and there is no greatest good, there is at least *a good* in the health of the body. (All the pleasures of the mind, which are called Joy, amount to expectations, anticipations and reasoning of consequences pertaining to things which are pleasurable to the sense.) The other goods are either good as means to fortify vital motion or promises which will fortify vital motion. There is a low but rational account of the pleasures for Hobbes. (It should also be noted that Hobbes refuses to say that this amounts to sensual pleasure, because it is meant as a term of derision which has no ground outside of law.)

Hobbes' calculation from pleasure and pain is therefore grounded first in the recognition that the fear of violent death is the worst evil and second that law is the only protection from this evil. Hobbes argues that considered correctly human beings should "seek

peace.” Once at peace, the subject is free to pursue pleasures which do not violate the law and therefore threaten the peace. The commonwealth, however, has an interest in those who seek to be industrious and enjoy the fruits of their labour, and does not have an interest in the slothful, who will need a threat to spurn them to work. In fact, Hobbes basis his whole account of punishment on a version of the calculus. In his seventh dictate regarding punishment Hobbes states:

“If the harm inflicted be less than the benefit, or contentment that naturally followeth the crime committed, that harm is not within the definition; and is rather the Price, or Redemption, than the Punishment of a Crime: Because it is of the nature of Punishment, to have for end, the disposing of men to obey the Law; which end (if it be less than the benefit of the transgression) it attaineth not, but worketh a contrary effect” (2.28.9).

Though Hobbes’ philosophy seems reducible to the hedonistic calculus it becomes much more difficult to see how it is pernicious. It is certainly not pernicious in the same way that Protagoras’ philosophy had the potential to be by divorcing the virtues of wisdom and courage from justice, moderation and piety. There is a unity of virtue for Hobbes and it is ultimately derivable from the fear of violent death, which in turn generates the *Leviathan*. Those who have the natural and conventional gifts necessary to become an effective sovereign, will see that the *Leviathan* is the greatest power on earth and therefore the most worthy to serve and be honoured by, or more ambitiously, to become. Should a subject become a sovereign, Hobbes’ laws of nature and account of the office of the sovereign representative, provides sound advice about how to maintain power, while maintaining justice as the rule of law. The *Leviathan* is the ‘King over all the sons of Pride’ and the sovereign is best counselled to show gratitude, as the fourth law of nature

prescribes. *Leviathan*, after all, is only a mortal god and every one, even Caesar, can be killed.

Because Hobbes' political philosophy appears to solve the major practical problems of Protagoras' political philosophy, and even appears to be a much improved version of Protagoras' philosophy, it is not for that reason immune to Socrates' critiques. Hobbes does not appear to seek, as Socrates might, the truth about the virtues and philosophy. Hobbes and Socrates still differ on the question between the ancients and moderns. Hobbes does fear that his work will be as useless as Plato's *Republic*, and he wants above all else to give a useful account. The question between Plato and Hobbes becomes whether the effectual truth is meaningfully separate from speculative truth. Hobbes seems to agree with Bacon who consistently asserted that effectual truths are worthwhile as proofs of speculative truths. Near the end of *Leviathan*, Hobbes takes up the question of the relationship between the knowledge discovered by the sciences and the commonwealth. In the final paragraph to Chapter 46, *Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions*, he states:

“With the introduction of false, we may join also the suppression of true philosophy, by such men as neither by lawful authority nor sufficient study are competent Judges of the truth. Our own navigations make manifest, and all men learned in human sciences, now acknowledge there are antipodes: And every day it appeareth more and more, that years, and days are determined by motions of the earth. Nevertheless, men that have in their writings but supposed such doctrine, as an occasion to lay open the reasons for, and against it, have been punished for it by authority ecclesiastical. But what reason is there for it? Is it because such opinions are contrary to true religion? That cannot be, if they be true. Let therefore the truth be first examined by competent judges, or confuted by them that pretend to know the contrary. Is it because they be contrary to the Religion established? Let them be silenced by the laws of those, to whom the teachers of them are subject (that is, by the laws civil). For disobedience may lawfully be punished in them, that against the Laws teach even true

philosophy. Is it because they tend to disorder in Government, as countenancing rebellion, or sedition? Then let them be silenced, and the Teachers punished by virtue of his power to whom the care of the Publique quiet is committed (which is the authority civil). For whatsoever power ecclesiastics take upon themselves (in any place where they are subject to the state) in their own right, though they call it Gods right, is but usurpation" (4.46.46).

Hobbes is consistent. The commonwealth is the mother of peace and leisure which is in turn the mother of philosophy: if true philosophy countenances rebellion or sedition then it may be legitimately suppressed by the civil power. Hobbes' account places great scepticism on the legitimate ground for the suppression of true philosophy. He also makes it clear that this is a decision which can only legitimately be made by the civil power. If the civil power embraces natural science, as *Leviathan* implicitly counsels through the importance of its account of causation in debunking religious authority, there should be no tension. The authority of the natural sciences would be legitimate within their field of study and is in fact integral to Hobbes' political project. Regarding political doctrines, Hobbes would argue that any doctrine which legitimizes rebellion or makes it probable could not be true political philosophy and is therefore legitimately suppressed. With that said, Hobbes never advocates that Aristotle, Hobbes' impolitic writer extraordinaire, never be taught again and his books be burned. He should not be taught as a legitimate serious political science, but he could still have a place in academia for his historical significance, or say, as a demonstration of the uselessness of the old political philosophy.

Lastly it is worthwhile to comment that there is a great danger in making the commonwealth the same as the mortal god. This criticism is explicitly made in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the section entitled *On the New Idol*.²³⁵

²³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated with an introduction by R. J. Hollingdale (New York, NY: Penguin Books limited, 1961), pp75-77.

5 **Review & Conclusion**

In ancient Greece, those who were reputed to profess wisdom, sophists as well as philosophers, were in continual danger from the political community. The difference between the sophist and the philosopher is the difference between a love of wisdom and a love of honour for wisdom. As expressions of *eros* they are different: what is required to win praise for wisdom among the many is different from what is required to acquire or even pursue wisdom. However, it appeared that both philosophers and sophists undermined the traditional religion and corrupted the youth. This tension led to the practice of esoteric philosophy, where one's true teachings were hidden beneath the surface of another art. Some more openly practiced their art: Protagoras openly admitted to be a sophist, while Socrates only admitted to knowing what he did not know. Both acquired the same reputation. This danger led the Platonic Socrates to advocate that the solution to human ills was to bring philosophical and political power together. This was

determined to be *almost* impossible in *Republic*, but in the *Laws* and *Protagoras* he advocates a private, indirect relationship between philosophers and those who wield political power. This solution meets Protagoras' criteria: which is that he can safely practice his art, but it took from him the reputation for wisdom. From the Socratic point of view, the best that can be hoped for in the public teaching is the hedonistic calculus, which does not account for virtue and isn't a sufficient ground to establish virtuous rule. But in order to gain a safe reputation for wisdom among the many, this is what one would have to teach.

Bacon provides a ground whereby the vulgar may honour wisdom as it is instantiated in the artefacts of Baconian science. These artefacts can be justly honoured as representing wisdom, and they are also beneficial, which is perhaps why they are praised. Bacon also, in establishing the method, prescribes a law whereby those who want to gain honour for wisdom can do so while still contributing to the progress of knowledge. Bacon solves the political problem of a public science, at least a public natural science.

Hobbes argues that he also solves the problem of a public political science to the point where he proclaims his *De Cive* to be the first work of political science. Bacon's political science remains hidden – while Hobbes, like Protagoras, believes he can justly claim to publicly teach politics. This political science steers a middle course between the liberty of the subject and the authority required of the sovereign in such a way that is against the interests of either. Though he appears to teach a version of the hedonistic calculus, his specific teaching in *Leviathan* is designed to temper or direct hubristic *eros*.

What Bacon's and Hobbes' sciences miss – at least as public teachings - is a fully human account of the soul. Modernity argues that for all practical purposes human beings operate on the principles of the hedonistic calculus. As Machiavelli argues, it is a grave and dangerous error for the *Prince* not to understand how to correctly use the beast and the man. While human laws are those conventions which govern men, they are useless unless it is understood that force (the lion) and fraud (the fox) are required to defend them.²³⁶ In *Leviathan* it is the sovereign who is to use the virtues of war, which are force and fraud, to maintain the law of international relations, which is the state of war, so as to promote the means and virtues of peace (justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy).²³⁷ While ancient philosophy aims to civilize man by waking his reason and opening it to the beautiful and the good, modern philosophy argues that this awaking is disastrous if it is taken as a teaching about statesmanship.²³⁸

The civilizing educational ascents of Platonic political philosophy are only indirectly and tangentially related practical politics, the bar aimed at in early English philosophy – following the Italian Doctor's lead. Politics is thus vulgarized and barbaric because it is severed from the Platonic beautiful and the good. In modern politics, which speaks to the vulgar, technical power is the height of the ascension to the good as the ground of knowledge. This represents the height of the ascent because it represents the limit of what can be appreciated by the vast majority of humanity. Modernity halts the Platonic ascent at the third stage of the divided line, the point which Glaucon associates with the technical arts and which in the context of the cave represents the zone between the

²³⁶ Machiavelli, *Prince*, pp 68-70.

²³⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1.15.30.

²³⁸ As cited in my account of the *Protagoras*, the Platonic dialogues do explore the philosophical implications of this view in its various manifestations in the *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Statesman* and others.

outside of the cave and the shadow puppeteers.²³⁹ The ground of technical power is not sought and not revealed, its artefacts are believed to be the end in themselves. The full meaning of the cave, as an artificially constructed home which mirrors the outside world imperfectly, is not known. In truth, and according to Baconian science, the artefacts of technical power are a sign of this higher knowledge, but they will never to be understood this way by the many. The true meaning of technical artefacts is therefore obscured and therefore the true meaning of Baconian science is also obscured. Its purpose becomes understood as, to put it most charitably, the relief of man's estate and less charitably, the 'green pasture happiness of the herd.' However, it seems clear that what Bacon proposes is that the technical arts should be embraced because they are in fact signs of the higher knowledge, which the ancients pursued fruitlessly. Bacon, if not Hobbes and other early moderns, can be read as aiming to fulfill unfulfilled promises of ancient philosophy. That their attempts also change the meaning of ancient philosophy is important, but it is also necessary to see that the early modern's relationship to ancient philosophy is more complicated than generally recognized.²⁴⁰ Bacon and Hobbes adopt the goals of ancient philosophy, true knowledge, but are not willing to rest on the view that the best knowledge can do for politics is 'not impossible.' In other words, their aim is not purely philosophical. However, it should also be noted that it is far from clear that Platonic political philosophy is supposed to rest content with contemplation and political goals that are 'not impossible.' Socrates argues in his *Apology* that his practice of philosophy

²³⁹ *Republic of Plato*, 511c-d.

²⁴⁰ See for example: "Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter," *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 50, No. 1 (February, 1988), pp. 108-130; Leon H. Craig, *Of Philosophers and Kings*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) and Craig, *The War Lover*; and Stanley Rosen's *Ancients and Moderns: Rethinking Modernity*. Rosen, Stanley (South Bend, Ind: St Augustine's Press, 1989).

can lead to virtue, which in turn would improve the democratic politics of Athens.²⁴¹ Plato's establishment of the Academy, so much criticized by Bacon and following Bacon, Hobbes, also establishes philosophy permanently in the cities. If the young of the cities were more systematically presented with a responsible liberal education, politics would have a better chance of becoming more civilized and therefore better. Modern politics and the increase of technical power do not in themselves make liberal education impossible or even undesirable. This only becomes a threat once modernity takes itself dogmatically. The moderns took civilization, the gift of ancient philosophy, for granted and demanded more from knowledge. They demanded knowledge give them power and civilization. What the early moderns perhaps took for granted was the extent of the potential danger which power poses to civilization, and this was investigated by the later moderns.²⁴²

Modernity also truncates the Platonic ascent to the beautiful. While the pursuit of the beautiful in the *Symposium*, at its highest, ends in knowledge of the beautiful, Baconian science aims to make technical power, or the love of the products of the mind, the highest recognizable knowledge. Knowledge of the beautiful provides the ground for knowledge of *eros*, which is knowledge of what humans pursue. It is *eros*' Aristophanian potential for hubris which most concerns this dissertation. I have tried to show that Hobbes' political philosophy, especially as it is manifest in *Leviathan*, is hubristic, but because of how it is hubristic it can meet some of the dangers identified in Protagoras' political philosophy. However, putting aside the psychological effect of *Leviathan*, its explicit teaching is not higher than Socrates and Protagoras' hedonistic calculus. It may be that

²⁴¹ *Apology of Socrates*, 30a-e

²⁴² See for example Rousseau's 1st and 2nd *Discourses*.

this teaching is a concession to the realization that a public higher teaching is not something to which the many could consent, but it also leaves little to aspire to in the public realm. If the state loses its ability to inspire reverence, in the particular way that *Leviathan* does, the public realm is open to being barbarized. As *Leviathan* provides a public teaching which is accessible to ‘even the meanest capacity,’ it also has a teaching which is accessible when it is studied in universities. The future rulers of the commonwealth must understand natural law, the nature of representation, justice, civil law, punishments and rewards, the causes of dissolution of the commonwealth and perhaps most importantly the state of nature. Central to the proper understanding, as was discussed in the previous chapter, is what *Leviathan* shares with Plato’s *Republic* and what it doesn’t. If this knowledge is lost, *Leviathan* and the regime it represents, which is characterised by individualism and representative government, is also in danger.

If Bacon and Hobbes understood the limits of their project, as I have been arguing, they can be understood to transcend the truncated view of the ascent to the beautiful and the good that I have outlined above. This is true regardless of how modernity itself developed, that is say, regardless of nihilism, relativism, historicism and all the other ‘isms’ of late or post-modernity. The recovery of the ancients in their relationship to the moderns shows the limits of modernity. By reading the early moderns as taking the ancients seriously (especially their works which directly deal with the most practical and ambitious men) we can also see there is still great worth in modern philosophy perhaps especially in early modern philosophy.

Modern philosophy has benefited mankind and endangered it. A recollection of the debate between the ancients and moderns can put the principles of modernity in

perspective and prevent them from becoming dogmatic. This recollection was attempted in the works of the later moderns: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Strauss and Kojève all strove, sometimes in radically different ways, to understand the ground of modernity with a view to the ancients.

Hegel re-grounds modernity in history, and through the logic of that history shows how modernity developed from the ancients.²⁴³ Nietzsche argued that though modernity has created great potential, it is also potentially hostile to life.²⁴⁴ Heidegger more radically denies any 'metaphysical' difference between the ancients and the moderns, grounding the technical world view in Plato. Heidegger, again more radically, aims for the recovery of some of the aspects of Augustine's philosophy and the philosophy of the pre-Socratics.²⁴⁵

Kojève argues that history has come to its purpose in principle (however contradictory that principle may be) and what remains is to understand living at the end of history.²⁴⁶ Strauss attempts to first, revive the tension between the ancients and moderns as a response to Heidegger's view of the ancients, and especially of Plato. Secondly, possibly as a response to Heidegger's apparent deference to aspects of Augustinian Christianity, Strauss argues the tension between reason and revelation is what represents the core or

²⁴³ This is most compellingly argued philosophically in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

²⁴⁴ See the preface to Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*.

²⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, Edited by William McNeil. "Plato's Doctrine of Truth: " Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; and Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*. Translated with introduction by William Lovitt. "The Question Concerning Technology." New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977.

²⁴⁶ See Kojève the *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Assembled by Raymond Queneau; edited by Allan Bloom; translated from the French by James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980).

nerve of the history of philosophy.²⁴⁷ The consequence of which is to recover a kind of 'natural consciousness' which is open to the fundamental questions or problems.²⁴⁸

To fully demonstrate what I have argued above it would be required to continue a study of the so called 1st and 2nd crises of modern natural right.²⁴⁹ The question of the meaning of history becomes paramount. Moderns raise the importance of history, perhaps because it inherited such a vast and detailed knowledge of so much history, but certainly because they were concerned with the effectual truth. History is a demonstration of what *has been* possible. While this doesn't limit what *could* happen, it is a ground which is consistent with modernity's concern with effectual truth. While Machiavelli, Hobbes and Bacon read history as a guide full of lessons for practical politics, later moderns argue that history itself has a coherent movement, and that history itself can provide a ontological ground for human life. In short, they argue that the story of human life grounds human life. A clearer understanding of the thought of Rousseau, Burke, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and others would allow a better understanding of how early modernity transforms into later modernity. It would also provide the basis by which it could be judged more precisely on how later moderns relate to both the early moderns and the ancients.

This study has aimed to contribute, in part, but above all to the approach of Leo Strauss. It differs, however, in important respects. It does not, for example, address the

²⁴⁷ Leo Strauss, *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss*, selected and edited by Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p 270.

²⁴⁸ See especially Leo Strauss, *What is political philosophy? and Other Studies* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1973, 1959), 9-27.

²⁴⁹ This way of characterizing the modern era is developed in Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, pp 252-253. Of special interest to this thesis is the section entitled the 'Origin of the Idea of Natural Right' where Strauss argues that the idea of natural right was generated through a contrast with the conventionalist approach to right. This chapter, when reflected on in light of the subsequent chapters on classical and modern natural right, shows that the origin of the debate between the ancients and the moderns is in the very origin of the idea of natural right. The two crises of modernity are then described as being lead by Rousseau and Nietzsche respectively.

relationship of revealed religion to the philosophy of early modernity. It attempts rather, to understand early English political philosophy as an attempt to improve upon ancient Greek political philosophy. The focus of this study was to show how the early moderns can be read as a response to the Socratic criticisms of the politics of the 'men of motion.' The early moderns, though 'men of motion' in important ways, attempt to meet the Socratic critique of the sophists, but from the practical ground of the sophists. In this sense, the division between the ancients and moderns is not one which can be limited to time.²⁵⁰ As Rosen argues, it is questionable whether the practical benefit of the recovering of the ancients lies with what might be learnt about the exercise of prudence. The study of the ancients, and especially Platonic political philosophy, allows us to better understand modernity. I suggest that the effect of this understanding is not to employ a different principle of prudence from the modern principle, which Rosen's 'conservative' argues, but, to be able to better employ the principles which a self-conscious modernity provides. In short, the study of the ancients allows us to be better moderns.

²⁵⁰ See Rosen, *The Ancients and the Moderns*, 17.

Appendix I: Dramatis Personae

Characters present at Callias' House (total 20 + eunuch + unspecified number)		
Protagoras of Abdera	Callias son of Hipponicus Paralus son Pericles Charmides, son of Glaucon	Xanthippus son of Pericles Philippides, son of Philomelus Antimoiros of Mende
Hippias of Elis	Eryximachus son of Acumenus Phaedrus of Myrrhinous Andron son of Androtion <i>Other Elisean's and misc strangers</i>	
ProdiCeos of Ceos	Pausanias from Cerames Agathon (no father mentioned) - Athenian Adeimantus son of Cepis Adeimantus son Leucolophidas <i>Misc others</i>	
Socrates of Athens	Alcibiades <i>the good looking</i> Critias son of Callaeschrus Hippocrates son Apollodorus	

Cities Represented	
Athens	14
Ceos (island off of Athens)	1
Abdera	1
Elis (on Peloponnesian peninsula)	1 + unnamed others
Myrrhinous	1
Mende (north of Athens and east)	1
Cerames	1

Appendix 2: Characters of the Protagoras in Other Platonic Dialogues

	Appears/Cited	Philosophical Authorities cited	Student of...	In X Platonic dialogues	Cited in...
Agathon	2 = Present 2 Cited 0		Prodicus	Protagoras, Symposium	
Alcibiades	6 = Present 4 Cited 2		Socrates?	Protagoras, Symposium, Alcibiades I Alcibiades II	Gorgias, Euthydemus,
Callias	5 = Present 1 Cited 4		Protagoras	Protagoras	Cratylus, Philebus, Apology. Theaetetus
Charmides	3 = Present 2 Cited 1		Protagoras	Charmides, Protagoras	Symposium
Critas, the younger	4 = Present 4 Cited 0		Socrates?	Protagoras Critas, Timaeus Charmides	
Hippias of Ellis	4 = Present 4 Cited 3			Protagoras, Hippias Major Hippias Minor	Phaedrus,
Eryximachus	3 = Present 2 Cited 1	Heraclites	Hippias	Protagoras, Symposium	Phaedrus
Pausanias	2= Present 2 Cited 0		Prodicus	Protagoras, Symposium	
Phaedrus	3 = Present 3 Cited 0	Parmenides	Hippias	Phaedrus, Protagoras, Symposium	
Prodicus	9 = Present 1 Cited 8			Protagoras	Hippias Major, Euthydemus, Laches, Meno, Symposium, Apology, Theaetetus Republic
Protagoras	8 = Present 1 Cited 7			Protagoras	Phaedrus, Theaetetus, Hippias major, Meno, Cratylus, Sophist Republic
Sons of Pericles			Protagoras		

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