The Role of Homeric Virtue in Plato's *Protagoras*

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Mary Gatta

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Introduction

A great theme of Plato's *Protagoras* is whether virtue, *ἀρετή*, is teachable. Throughout the dialogue, Plato's classic quintessence—justice, temperance, courage, piety, and wisdom—is discussed at length. Thus, at first blush, one may assume that Protagoras's teaching, which is refered to as a virtue, promises at least one of Plato's five virtues. Yet, in addition to Protagoras's teaching being classified as virtue, it is also referred to as rhetoric and political excellence. Therefore, when considering Protagoras's teaching, one may ask: How can rhetoric and political excellence both be virtue?

Some, having seen this puzzle, propose that Protagoras offers differing descriptions of his teaching as a way to appeal to an assortment of social classes. As a professional sophist, Protagoras must provide a teaching which is marketable to those of varying statuses. For instance, Arthur Adkins, "ἀρετή, τέχνη, Democracy and Sophists: Protagoras 316b-328d," argues that Protagoras's promise to teach a skill upholds the aristocratic belief that virtue is limited (318e, 319a, 324c5, 328c), while his claim that virtue is ubiquitous champions the democratic spirit (322b, 322d, 323a, 324a, 325b-e, 328a).[1] Similarly, A. Nathan, in "Protagoras' Great Speech," posits that Protagoras caters to the elite by insisting that merely following the law is not sufficient for virtue (312a, 316c-317c, 319a, 339a, 352e), and entices the many by defending that virtue is accessible to all (323a-c, 324a-b, 324d-328c, 326a). In both cases, Adkins and Nathan consider the mixed statuses and backgrounds of Protagoras's audience and emphasize the business aspects of Protagoras's teaching.

[1] Adkins, in "ἀρετή, τέχνη, Democracy and Sophists: Protagoras 316b-328d," further divides the upper class into those already established and those poised to become politically prominent. This latter category includes those who newly acquired wealth and members of the hoplite class (11-12).

However, the objective of this essay is not to demonstrate that Protagoras's teaching attracts different customers. Instead, I argue that Protagoras's teaching can be classified as rhetoric, political excellence, and virtue, because it offers a modified version of Homeric virtue. This argument spans four sections. First, I examine the relationship between the three classifications of Protagoras's teaching: rhetoric, political excellence, and virtue (311d-317b, 318a-323a, 318a, 319a). As fifth-century Athenian democracy requires all male citizens to participate in the Assembly, rhetorical skill is an essential feature of political excellence. As such, I propose that the first two classifications of Protagoras's teaching, rhetoric and political excellence, may be referred to by the single term of political rhetoric.

Before, connecting political rhetoric with virtue, the third classification of Protagoras's teaching, I offer a summary of Homeric virtue. Drawing heavily from Adkins's, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study of Greek Values,* this second section outlines the three main qualities of Homeric virtue. First, it is I) composed of three competitive excellences: (i) skill in battle (ii) descent from noble lineage and (iii) the possession of wealth and power. Second, Homeric virtue is II) constituted by success; and, third, it is III) descent by the city, *polis*. Later, in my final section, I analyze how Protagoras's teaching of political rhetoric mirrors all three of Homeric virtue's qualities.

Yet, prior to fleshing out how Homeric virtue persists and evolves throughout Protagoras's teaching, I engage with the possibility that Protagoras forwards democratic rather than Homeric virtue. In the third section, I recognize that Protagoras appears to hold two democratic features: (i) the belief that virtue is universal (322d, 323a-325c, 323c-324a) and (ii) the notion that justice and temperance are central to virtue (322c, 323a). As Protagoras's

portrayal of rulers discloses that virtue is revered for the elite (*317a-b,* 328b) and his use of justice and temperance conforms to Homeric virtue (323a-e), I conclude that Protagoras's teaching does not resemble democratic virtue.

Finally, in the fourth section, I assert that Protagoras's teaching promises a modified version of Homeric virtue, by embodying the three primary qualities of Homeric virtue: I) composed of competitive excellences, II) constituted by success, and III) determined by the city, *polis.* Still, Protagoras's teaching of political rhetoric is not a direct copy of Homeric virtue. While the competitive excellence of warfare takes place on the battlefield, Protagoras's teaching of political rhetoric occurs in the area of the Assembly. Instead of developing skill in battle, Protagoras instructs in the competitive art of political rhetoric. Subsequently, political rhetoric depends on successfully convincing one's audience. In turn this dependence ensures that political rhetoric is determined by the *polis*. Therefore, Protagoras's teaching of political rhetoric embodies the three features of Homeric virtue.

Notably, my argument—that Protagoras's teaching promises a modified version of Homeric virtue—is far from unique. Protagoras's use of Homeric virtue frequently highlights the discussion of how Protagoras markets to differing social classes. Under this frame, it is often proposed that Protagoras's established aristocratic patrons are sympathetic to a teaching which, like Homeric virtue, restricts virtue to the noble class. In turn, Protagoras's use of justice and temperance is viewed as a placation of the nouveau riche and a diversion from the traditional hierarchical values of Homeric virtue (320d-322e, 322c-326, 323b-c).[2] By contrast, I argue that Protagoras, even during his discussions of temperance and justice, remains committed to

[2] See Adkins, "ἀρετή, τέχνη, Democracy and Sophists: Protagoras 316b-328d "Protagoras' Great Speech," and Nathan, "Protagoras' Great Speech," for further discussion on Homeric virtue's appeal to the elite.

Homeric virtue. I propose that Homeric virtue persists through Protagoras's Myth, Great Speech, and Theory of Punishment.

Section 1: The Three Main Characterizations of Protagoras's Teaching

Within the opening third of the *Protagoras*, Protagoras's teaching is classified as three things: 1) rhetoric, 2) political excellence, and 3) virtue. First, Hippocrates asserts that a sophist, such as Protagoras, teaches the art of rhetoric (311d-317b). Then, Protagoras proposes to advise: sound deliberation, the art of citizenship, that which a city needs to survive, political excellence, the art of politics, and justice (*318a-323a)*. Finally, wondering whether such a thing is teachable, Socrates refers to Protagoras's teaching as a virtue (*319a-320b).* Although these descriptions do not seem to be harmonious, no character proposes that tension surrounds the claim that a single teaching is rhetoric, political excellence, and virtue.[3] To unravel how these three characterizations relate to one another, let us consider each of them in turn.

1.1 Rhetoric (311d-317b)

Over the course of two arguments, Hippocrates classifies Protagoras's teaching as rhetoric. At the outset, Hippocrates declares that Protagoras teaches wisdom: "[Protagoras] has a monopoly on wisdom and won't give me any" (310d).[4] Therefore, it appears as if Protagoras's teaching is wisdom. However, under Socrates's questioning, Hippocrates alters and refines his position to assert that Protagoras instructs one to speak cleverly. In response to Socrates's

[3] For purpose of this paper, I assume that Protagoras's offers one teaching. When pushed to describe his work, Protagoras declares to teach a single skill, namely, sound deliberation (319). As such, it seems possible that rhetoric, political excellence and virtue are all different names for sound deliberation. Still, one could propose that Protagoras provides numerous teachings. In this case, rather than focusing directly on Homeric virtue, one would need to explore whether such different teachings are consistent.

[4] Unless stated otherwise, all quotations from the *Protagoras* are from Lombard and Bell.

inquiry about a sophist's profession, Hippocrates offers two arguments, which work in tandem to distill the whole of Protagoras's teaching from general wisdom to clever speaking. Moreover, the discrepancy between these two arguments calls into question whether Protagoras is wise.

Hippocrates's first argument supports his claim that Protagoras teaches wisdom.

Argument A (311e-312c)

1. Sophists understand wise things.
2. Protagoras is a sophist.
3. Therefore, Protagoras understands wise things.

Interestingly, the conclusion—Protagoras understands wise things—is rather vague and begs the question: About which things is Protagoras wise? This puzzle is resolved by Hippocrates's second argument. In his second argument, Hippocrates posits that professionals are wise about the products which pertain to their work. For instance, a painter creates a painting and is "wise as far as making images is concerned" (312d).

Argument B (312d)

1. One who is a professional Y makes a X.
2. One who is a professional Y is wise about a X.
3. A professional sophist makes a clever speaker.
4. Therefore, a sophist is wise about making clever speakers.

From this second conclusion, it becomes apparent that the "thing," about which Protagoras is wise, is the making of a clever speaker.[5] Though Hippocrates proclaims that Protagoras has a *monopoly on wisdom*, these two arguments restrict Protagoras's wisdom to the process of making a skilled orator. Accordingly, Protagoras's teaching is reduced from general wisdom to the art of rhetoric.

[5] Please note, I am assuming that 'understands' is equivalent to 'is wise.'

Interestingly, while Arguments A and B establish that Protagoras teaches rhetorical skill, they also destabilize Hippocrates's earlier notion that Protagoras, holding *a monopoly on wisdom*, is wise (310d). After confidently asserting that sophists are able to make one into a clever speaker, Hippocrates struggles to identify in which subjects a sophist trains one to speak (312e).[6] Since the areas of a sophist's teaching remain elusive, it is plausible to ask whether it is certain that Protagoras is knowledgeable about the subjects which he teaches.[7] To make a case that having knowledge about the topic of discussion is paramount to discussing it well, consider Socrates's remarks on poetry from the *Republic*: "If a good poet produces fine poetry, he must have knowledge of the things he writes about" (*Republic* 598e).[8] If one applies this standard of knowledge to Protagoras, then it does not directly follow, at least for Hippocrates's telling, that Protagoras is wise. Since the subjects which Protagoras teaches remain ambiguous, one cannot confirm whether he has knowledge of them. As such, Hippocrates's initial proposal that Protagoras is wise becomes more tenuous.

[6] Jens Larsen, "By What Is the Soul Nourished? On the Art of the Physician of Souls in Plato's Protagoras," concludes that Hippocrates "does not imagine that he needs to acquire knowledge about political matters in order to become renowned in the *polis"* (87). Larsen argues that Hippocrates may be dangerous, for he wishes to gain political distinction, without attempting to understand political matters (80, 86). While I agree that Hippocrates desires political distinction, I am uncertain whether he is dangerous. As Hippocrates does not appear to have given much thought about sophists (312b), it may not be fair to expect him to answer all of Socrates's questions with ease. Furthermore, Hippocrates evolves throughout the dialogue. For instance, though initially desperate to study with Protagoras, he departs with Socrates (310-311a, 362a). As an malleable character, Hippocrates's initial ignorance about sophists may not be indicative of any lasting danger.

[7] Please note, I assume that having knowledge about X is a prerequisite to being wise about X.

[8] Also, I am assuming that one who speaks 'cleverly' must speak 'well.' Still, there is a case to be made that speaking cleverly is distinct from speaking well. For instance, one who speaks cleverly may be able to persuade one's audience into believing that one has knowledge about the topic of discussion. On the contrary, one who speaks well demonstrates that one has knowledge about the topic of discussion. In these instances, speaking cleverly and speaking well have different aims. The clever speaker strives to persuade, while those who speak well intend to relay knowledge. Yet, in both cases, the speaker gains the reputation for having knowledge about their spoken topic. However, if one accepts that knowledge is a prerequisite for wisdom, then only the one who spoke well, and not the one who spoke cleverly, is actually wise.

1.1.1 Hippocrates's Questionable Intention (311c, 316c)

As demonstrated by his early arrival— "while it was still dark, Hippocrates, ...banged on [Socrates's] door with his stick, and when it was opened for him he barged right in and yelled… 'Socrates are you awake or asleep?'" (310b)—Hippocrates itches to learn from Protagoras. His effervescent spirit and charged enthusiasm are so intense that when asked how much he would pay for Protagoras's teaching, he responds alarmingly: "I'd bankrupt myself and my friends too" (310e). Since he continually trumpets Protagoras's greatness, it is presumable that Hippocrates wishes to emulate Protagoras by becoming a sophist.

Furthermore, under Socrates's continued questioning, Hippocrates asserts a third argument: that when one pays to learn a profession's skill, one hopes to become a practitioner of that profession.

Argument C (311c)

1. Each professional Y teaches the skill of Z.
2. If one pays Y to teach Z, then one hopes to become a Y.
3. A professional sophist teaches the skill of rhetoric.

Given Hippocrates's reckless willingness to pay for Protagoras's teachings, one would assume, as indicated by Argument C, that Hippocrates hopes to become a sophist. Yet, perplexingly, Hippocrates does not aspire to become a sophist. On the contrary, he confesses that being a sophist would cause him shame (312a). Thus, instead of directly addressing the nature of Protagoras's teaching, Hippocrates's third argument draws out the uncertainty which surrounds Hippocrates's purpose of learning rhetoric.

In order to solve this puzzle, two questions must be answered: I) What skill does Hippocrates believe that Protagoras teaches? II) How does Hippocrates intend to apply this skill? The answer to the former question has already been addressed—Hippocrates postulates that

Protagoras teaches the skill of rhetoric. As illustrated in the conclusions of Arguments A and B—Protagoras understands wise things and a sophist is wise about making clever speakers— I) Hippocrates believes that Protagoras is wise about making clever speakers.

1.1.2 Hippocrates's Desire for Political Rhetoric (316b-c)

To address the second question—II) how does Hippocrates intend to apply this newly learned rhetoric?—consider Socrates's account of Hippocrates. Socrates's presentation of Hippocrates offers a glimpse into Hippocrates's future ambitions. When announcing their purpose for visiting Protagoras, Socrates coveys that Hippocrates aims to become a *politically competent speaker:* "I think that [Hippocrates] wants to become *eminent in public life,* and he thinks that would be most likely to happen if he were to become a pupil of [Protagoras]" (316c).[9] According to Socrates, Hippocrates thinks that associating with Protagoras will lead to an active and favorable political career. By coupling these two responses together—I) Hippocrates believes that sophists teach rhetoric and II) he holds political ambitions—it is probable that Hippocrates intends to learn to make clever political speeches.[10] He is desperate to learn from Protagoras, for he characterizes Protagoras's teaching to be political rhetoric.[11]

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[9] First, the phrase, 'eminent in public life,' is italicized for emphasis. Second, the term 'politically competent speaker' is lifted directly from Larsen's essay, "By What is the Soul Nourished? On the Art of the Physician of Souls in Plato's Protagoras." Finally, this quotation comes from Taylor's translation of the *Protagoras*. I chose to reference it because the phrase, 'eminent in public life,' emphasizes Hippocrates's political ambitions.

[10] Reasoning from Argument C suggests that if one pays a sophist, then one aims to become a sophist. Why Hippocrates does not apply this outcome to sophistry remains unresolved. It is uncertain what permits a sophist to teach a skill whose application reaches beyond the immediate profession of sophistry.

[11] In "Socrates' Sophisticated Attack on Protagoras," Knut Ågotnes argues that Socrates's introduction of Hippocrates indicates that Hippocrates does not covet Protagoras's teaching for its philosophical value (24). Instead, Ågotnes proposes that Hippocrates yearns for honor (23-25). While I agree that Hippocrates wants political honor, I am hesitant to accept that he separates this political success from philosophy. After all, Hippocrates opens by praising Protagoras's wisdom.

Hippocrates's aristocratic lineage supports the proposal that he desires to secure political distinction.[12] The political importance of Hippocrates's family is made evident by Socrates's introduction of him: "Hippocrates is from here, a son of Apollodorus and a member of a great and well to do family" (316b). This introduction implies that those present are aware and respectful of Apollodorus. As many who have gathered in Callias's home are themselves politicians, it is likely that Hippocrates's family either practices politics or, at least, belongs to the same social circle as politicians.[13] Since Hippocrates's family enjoys a privileged social position, it seems fitting that Hippocrates would intend to uphold his family's reputation by gaining political distinction via rhetorical skill. As such, Hippocrates classifies Protagoras's teaching to be 1) rhetoric which likely functions as a means to gaining political power.

1.2 Political Excellence (318a-323a)

The second characterization of Protagoras's teaching, 2) political excellence, comes directly from Protagoras. During the early stages of his discussion with Socrates, Protagoras offers seven definitions of his teaching: (i) sound deliberation, (ii) the art of citizenship, (iii) virtue, (vi) that which a city needs to survive, (v) political excellence, (vi) the art of politics, and (vii) justice.[14] (As Protagoras proposes that these qualities are equivalent with each other, for the sake of space, I shall refer to this collection as political excellence). Since Protagoras easily

[12] See Ågotnes's, "Socrates' Sophisticated Attack on Protagoras," and Larsen, "What is the Soul Nourished? On the Art of the Physician of Souls in Plato's Protagoras," for discussion about Hippocrates's ambition for political honor.

[13] See Debra Nails's, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*, for further information about Hippocrates's family (169-170). In addition, Hippocrates's brother being deemed important enough to be informed of Protagoras's visit further supports that Hippocrates belongs to the aristocracy (310c).

[14] In "Protagoras… or Plato? II. The 'Protagoras,'" Joseph Maguire offers good judgment= political expertise = good citizenship = virtue = political wisdom = political expertise = political virtue = justice and self-control = justice and the rest of political virtue = justice, self-control and piety = human virtue (103-122).

transitions from one to another, it is reasonable to assume that he considers his teaching to encompass all of these qualities. In order to relate these seven characteristics to one another, I map out three arguments.[15]

1.2.1 Sound Deliberation and The Art of Citizenship (318b-319a)

First, while discussing the merits of his teaching, Protagoras announces that he offers "sound deliberation, both in domestic matters—how best to manage one's household, and in public affairs—how to realize one's maximum potential for success in political debate and action" (318e-319a). Without haste, Protagoras agrees with Socrates's proposition that sound deliberation in such matters is equivalent to the art of citizenship. Therefore, Protagoras characterizes his teaching as (i) sound deliberation and (ii) the art of citizenship.

Argument D (318b-319a)

1. Protagoras teaches sound deliberation of domestic and political matters.
2. Sound deliberation of domestic and political matters is the art of citizenship.
3. Therefore, Protagoras teaches the art of citizenship.

1.2.2 Virtue, Political Excellence, and What a City Needs to Survive (319a-320b, 322a-323a)

In response to Protagoras's promise to teach the art of citizenship, Socrates posits that such a virtue is ubiquitous (319a-320b). Rather than question whether the art of citizenship is a virtue, Protagoras again expands the description of his teaching to include (iii) virtue and (iv) what a city needs to survive. He turns his attention to defending how this virtue must be universal through the telling of a myth. During this myth he classifies the ability to offer advice on matters of political excellence as a virtue. As such, Protagoras asserts that he instructs one in the virtue of offering advice on political matters (323a). In addition, within this cosmogonic

[15] Marguire's, "Protagoras… or Plato? II. The 'Protagoras,'" and Adkins's, "ἀρετή, τέχνη, Democracy and Sophists: Protagoras 316b-328d," both assert that Protagoras accepts Socrates's classifications.

myth, Protagoras defends that a city survives *iff* all men possess the virtue to offer advice on matters of political excellence (322a-323a).[16] In other words, (vi) what a city needs to survive is identical with the virtue to offer advice on matters of (v) political excellence.

Argument E (323a)

1. Protagoras teaches the art of citizenship.
2. The art of citizenship is a virtue.
3. The art of citizenship is the virtue of offering advice on matters of political excellence.
4. Protagoras teaches the virtue of political excellence. [17]
5. Political excellence is what a city needs to survive.
6. Protagoras teaches what a city needs to survive.

1.2.3 The Art of Politics and Justice (322a-323a)

What is more, throughout his myth, Protagoras enlarges the characterization of his teaching to include two additional features: (vi) the art of politics and (vii) justice. According to his myth, man lacks the art of politics, which is needed to form cities. Without such cities, man is deficient at fighting wild animals and in danger of becoming extinct. In order to preserve the human species, Zeus presents all people with justice and a sense of shame. With these gifts, man establishes cities and defends himself against the beasts. Protagoras concludes that the ability to offer advice on matters of political excellence is necessary for the survival of cities.[18] As such, Protagoras's teaching, the art of politics, justice, and the virtue to offer advice of matters of political excellence are all that which a city needs to survive.

[16] Please note, in this case, virtue refers to an ability. As political rhetoric refers to a skill, the virtue of offering advice on matters of political excellence is an ability.

[17] Protagoras calls the offering of advice on matters of political excellence a "particular virtue" (323a). For the sake of condensing all of Protagoras's descriptions, I shall refer to this single virtue as "political excellence."

[18] Interestingly Protagoras asserts, "whenever a debate involves political excellence, [it] must proceed entirely from justice and temperance" (323a). Thus, in addition to claiming to teach justice, Protagoras believes that his teaching depends upon it.

Argument F (322a-323a)

1. Protagoras teaches what a city needs to survive.
2. A city survives *iff* all men have political excellence.
3. A city survives *iff* all men have the art of politics.
4. A city survives *iff* all men have justice.
5. Political excellence is the art of politics.
6. The art of politics is justice.
7. Therefore, Protagoras teaches political excellence, the art of politics, and justice.

As shown by Arguments D, E, and F, Protagoras offers a very robust characterization of his teaching: (i) sound deliberation, (ii) the art of citizenship, (iii) virtue, (iv) that which a city needs to survive, (v) political excellence, (vi) the art of politics, and (vii) justice. Still, (i) sound deliberation, *euboulia*, relates to (ii) the art of citizenship, (v) political excellence, and (vi) the art of citizenship.[19] *Euboulia*, managing a household well and actualizing success in politics, is equivalent to (ii) the art of citizenship and constitutive of (v) political excellence and the (vi) art of politics.[20] Furthermore, *euboulia* is essential to the survival of a city. Yet, it is troubling how one may classify *euboulia* as either (vii) justice or a (iii) general virtue. However, before addressing this matter, another issue that permeates Protagoras's description of his teaching needs to be considered: namely, it is unclear what effects the teaching has.

[19] Many, including Maguire and Nathan, classify Protagoras as teaching *euboulia*; still, each recognizes that *euboulia* poses a complication. In "Protagoras' Great Speech," Nathan proposes that *euboulia* promises to make one *pre-eminent*, which appears to be comparable with being a good citizen. Thus, Nathan asks, "does Protagoras perhaps think that obedience to the laws is sufficient for political expertise?" (385). Likewise, Maguire, "Protagoras… or Plato? II. The 'Protagoras,'" asserts that *euboulia*, which is amoral, stands in conflict with Protagoras's later discussion of justice, temperance, and piety (106). For further discussion on the a-morality of *euboulia*, see Adkins's, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (22-25).

[20] One may note that being "constitutive of" is very different from being "equivalent to." The art of citizenship and sound deliberation concern the role of a citizen, while the art of politics and political excellence may refer to the role of a leader. In turn, that which a city needs to survive, may pertain to both. In "Protagoras' Great Speech," Nathan asserts that Protagoras blurs the line between being a good citizen and being a good leader. While I agree that both the positions of citizen and political leader are being described, the distinction between the two is not evident. For further discussion on the blurred line between citizen and leader, see Taylor's "Explanatory Notes."

1.2.4 The Effect of Protagoras's Teaching (318a, 319a)

When Socrates inquires as to how students will benefit from studying with Protagoras, Protagoras offers two responses: I) general improvement and II) the art of citizenship.[21] First, he insists I) that "the very day [a student] start[s], [they] will go home a better man, and the same thing will happen the day after. Every day, day after day, [they] will get better and better" βελτίων (318b). Then, after being asked to specify in which area a student is bettered, Protagoras presents a second outcome, II) learning the art of citizenship will "make men good citizens" ποιεῖν ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς (319a). Importantly, a tension emerges between (I) Protagoras's promise to bring about improvement and (II) his proclamation to make men into good citizens. One may wonder whether the vague improvement, βελτίων, applies to the improvement of becoming a better citizen.

In order to solve this puzzle, consider two usages of βελτίων: (i) as indicative of a *moral idea* or (ii) as refering to a-moral duties. In light of the former translation, (i) a moral idea, one may believe that Protagoras's teaching improves one by nurturing one's sense of justice and temperance. [22] While being a good citizen may require that one improves in terms of justice and temperance, it is not equivalent to developing such improvements. As such, if one understands βελτίων to mean improvement in justice and temperance, then one concludes that (I) Protagoras's promise to bring about improvement in one's justice and temperance is not identical with (II) his proclamation *to make men into good citizens*.

[21] Ågotnes, in "Socrates' Sophisticated Attack on Protagoras," highlights that, at this stage of the dialogue, Protagoras's teaching remains undefined, for Protagoras has offered no specific characteristics of his profession (26).

[22] The phrase 'moral idea' is lifted from Smyth's work, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges.*

On the other hand, βελτίων may not indicate quieter virtues such as justice and temperance (Adkins 30, 32, 38, 157, 199, 205). In *Merit and Responsibility: A Study of Greek Values,* Adkins argues that many fifth-century Athenians accepted a wider understanding of βελτίων (ii) which encompassed many a-moral duties, which pertained to both civic and domestic matters.[23] If one understands βελτίων to refer to this broader category of duties, then Protagoras's two pledged outcomes—(I) to bring about general improvement and (II) *to make men into good citizens*—do not appear to be at odds with one another, for neither affects one's justice or temperance. Moreover, Protagoras's assertion to teach *euboulia* seems very similar to βελτίων, understood as a variety of a-moral duties which pertain to civic and domestic matters.

On the whole, Protagoras's characterization of his teaching proposes three main challenges. First, as previously noted, he equates together sound deliberation, the art of citizenship, that which a city needs to survive, political excellence, the art of politics, and justice. Second, by accepting Socrates's classification that his teaching is a virtue, he classifies all of these qualities as a virtue. Third, given the alternative implications of βελτίων, it is unclear whether Protagoras believes that his teaching betters one's justice or simply improves one in terms of domestic and civic duties.

[23] In the same vein, C. W. Taylor writes in "Explanatory Notes," while the "Greeks did indeed count some moral virtues as prominent among qualities that make a man good, they recognized much else besides" (75). For instance, since 5th century Greek democracy required male citizens to participate in political assemblies, participating well in such gatherings was as fundamental to being a good man as being just was. Thus, Taylor argues that Protagoras's exclamation "to make men good citizens" (319a), ποιεῖν ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας may be translated either as *to make men into good citizens* or as *to make citizens into good men* (75-76).

1.3 The Art of Citizenship and Virtue (319a-320b)

Still, before engaging with these issues, consider the final classification of Protagoras's teaching, 3) virtue. As mentioned in the previous section, Socrates refers to Protagoras's teaching as a virtue. After Protagoras promises to teach the art of citizenship, Socrates posits two arguments as to why such a thing is unteachable.[24] Between these arguments, Socrates alters between calling Protagoras's teaching an art and a virtue. While this shift in language is very curious, I do not attempt to resolve the mystery within this section. Instead of answering how Protagoras's teaching is a virtue, I direct my attention to Socrates's two examples as to why virtue is unteachable: (I) offering advice to the Assembly about a matter of city management and (II) Pericles's failure to pass on his talent. When examining these cases, two features are important: (i) Socrates also classifies Protagoras's teaching as the skill of rhetoric and (ii) this rhetoric pertains to a specific kind of political speech. From Socrates's examples, rhetoric is shown to be essential to the art of citizenship.

In Socrates's first argument (I), he proposes that Protagoras's teaching of the art of citizenship, which he refers to as city management, lacks an expert and, therefore, is unteachable (319a-320a).[25] In the second argument (II), Socrates asserts that Protagoras's teaching, now called a virtue, cannot be passed between familiar generations (320a-b). In this latter argument,

[24] Please note, I treat the art of citizenship to be equivalent with political excellence. While I refer to political excellence for most of the essay, I select to use the art of citizenship for this portion as a means of contrasting it with virtue.

[25] Argument G (319a-320a)

1) X is teachable *iff* the city permits only specialists to advise on X. (It should be noted that this first premise assumes that the city is wise.)
2) The city permits only specialists to advise on technical matters.
3) Thus, technical matters are teachable.
4) The city permits non-specialists to advise on the city management.
5) Therefore, city management is not teachable.

Socrates posits that Pericles, one of Athens's "wisest and best of [the Athenian] citizen[s]" (319e), is unable to teach his offspring the virtues which he possessed (319e).[26] Since Pericles provides his children with *superb education* in all teachable subjects, his failure to pass along virtue demonstrates that this virtue is unteachable.[27] (Again, from these arguments, I wish to concentrate on the examples; I do not intend to comment on whether or not virtue is teachable.)[28]

1.3.1 Public Political Rhetoric (319a-320b)

In these examples, Socrates (i) describes Protagoras's teaching as the skill of rhetoric and (ii) restricts rhetoric to a particular kind of public political speech. First, both of Socrates's examples, speaking to the Assembly and Pericles's failure to teach his virtue, identify Protagoras's teaching as the art of rhetoric. When offering advice in the Assembly, one is required to craft a rhetorical speech. Likewise, by using Pericles as the emblematic figure of Protagoras's teaching, Socrates pinpoints Protagoras's teaching to be rhetoric. Pericles, a prominent political figure, is "the first man of his day at Athens, and the greatest orator and statesman" (Thucydides I, 139).[29] The great skill, which he is unable to teach to his offspring, is

[26] "Citizen" is italicized for emphasis.

[27] Argument H (320a-b)

1) Y is teachable *iff* the wisest and best citizens can teach Y.
2) P is the wisest and best citizen.
3) P teaches all that is teachable.
4) If P teaches his offspring virtue, then P's offspring are as virtuous as P.
5) P's offspring are not as virtuous as P. (Assumption)
6) Thus, P did not teach his offspring virtue.
7) Therefore, virtue is not teachable.

[28] As Socrates later revokes the position that virtue is unteachable, the importance of this argument might not be its conclusion: "[I] said earlier that virtue cannot be taught, but now [I am] arguing the very opposite…in which case, virtue would appear to be eminently" (361b-c).

[29] As Charles Griswold writes in "Relying on Your Own Voice: An Unsettled Rivalry of Moral Ideals in Plato's 'Protagoras,'" Pericles failed in teaching the art of rhetoric, not justice. Adkins also defends this argument in "ἀρετή, τέχνη, Democracy and Sophists: Protagoras 316b-328d."

the talent of delivering an elocution. Therefore, from 319a-320b, Socrates chastises Protagoras for claiming to be able to teach (i) the skill of rhetoric.

Second, Socrates reduces the art of citizenship to the ability (ii) to offer a persuasive political speech. In the case of offering advice to the Assembly, one's speech must pertain to civic matters and be delivered within a public sphere. One's speech must be politically driven and, therefore, it must also seek to be persuasive. Correspondingly, by naming Pericles the "wisest and best of [the Athenian] citizens" (319e), Socrates again zeros in on the skill of making persuasive political speeches to the public. Pericles's fame as a politician and orator depends on his ability to impart assuasive speeches to his fellow citizens. Thus, Socrates criticizes Protagoras for teaching (ii) the distinctive art of making compelling public and political speeches. (Looking forward to the discussion of Homeric virtue, it is important to note that the lack of an expert ensures that the many will determine the nature of a successful political speech, in contrast to a poor one.)

In light of Socrates's belief that Protagoras teaches one to make a public, political, and persuasive speech, it becomes evident how the classifications of rhetoric and political excellence are related. First, both Hippocrates and Socrates characterize Protagoras's teaching as rhetoric. In addition, Hippocrates believes that this rhetoric will bring about political distinction, while Socrates depicts this rhetoric as occurring in the Assembly and entailing the delivery of a convincing political speech. As successfully delivering a political speech naturally increases one's political distinction, Socrates and Hippocrates may classify Protagoras's teaching as the same thing.[30] Furthermore, this kind of political rhetoric is intertwined with the art of citizenship.

[30] Please note that Hippocrates, unlike Socrates, does call Protagoras's teaching a virtue.

Since all fifth-century Athenian citizens were required to participate in the Assembly, rhetoric was an essential aspect of the art of citizenship.[31] Moreover, those who gained political distinction often did so by persuading the Assembly and utilizing rhetorical skill. As such, Protagoras's teaching emerges to be persuasive political rhetoric, which results in political distinction and is essential to the art of citizenship. Yet, it remains unsettled how this teaching is a virtue.

Section 2: Homeric Virtue

Before defending the position that Protagoras's teaching is a modified version of Homeric virtue, let us map out the three qualities of Homeric virtue. Authur Adkins, in *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values,* asserts that Homeric virtue is defined by three key features: 1) it is composed of c*ompetitive excellences*, 2) constituted by success and 3) determined by the *polis*. Accordingly, a Homericly virtuous man successfully protects his family and friends by securing the goods necessary for their survival.[32] While being composed of competitive excellences and defending one's kin seems to entail that Homeric virtue benefits others, its latter two features permit it to be self-serving.[33] Consequently, Adkins's Homeric virtue is able to be privatized.

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[31] Taylor writes in "Explanatory Notes," "[the] distinction [, between the good statesman and the good citizen,] was less clear-cut in an extreme democracy such as fifth-century Athens, where every adult male citizen was a member of the supreme deliberative assembly and might find himself obligated by lot to perform a variety of executive functions" (74).

[32] Adkins, in *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values,* argues that since Homeric cities lacked the organization to protect the lives of all civilians, an excellent man primarily protected his kin (35). However, Adkins asserts that these skills were viewed to be necessary for the survival of the *polis* (*Merit and Responsibility* 36).

[33] To support that a virtuous hero must be talented in battle, of highborn heritage, and in possession of wealth and power, Adkins, in *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*, turns to the instance when Odysseus disguises himself as a beggar (32). Though appearing to be impoverished, Odysseus remains superior to others (Odyssey xv. 324). Adkins interprets this example as proof that virtue designates a class (32-33). In opposition, Margalit

2.1 Composed of Competitive Excellences

Still, before diving further into Adkins's definition of Homeric virtue, one must distinguish competitive excellences from cooperative ones. A competitive excellence is a skill whose success is contingent on successfully attaining a competitive good. A competitive good is something that is zero sum in nature, such as natural resources, money, and power. For instance, the competitive excellence of fighting depends upon winning a battle and attaining the competitive good of glory. By contrast, cooperative excellences measure fairness, not success. These excellences, which include justice and temperance, value one's intentions. According to Adkins, cooperative excellences seek to further the community's interests and pertain to matters like contracts and partnerships (*Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* 33-40).

Now, having defined these terms, let us return to the three characteristics of Homeric virtue. The first feature of Homeric virtue is 1) that it is composed of competitive excellences. According to Adkins, one who is Homericaly virtuous must have three competitive excellences: (I) skill in battle, (II) a noble heritage, and (III) wealth and power (*Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* 33-39).[34] In times of war, a virtuous person must offer cunning military strategies, display finesse on the battlefield, and return with the spoils of victory. During periods of peace, a Homeric hero must belong to the noble class, which has the leisure to develop and to

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Finkelberg, in "Timē and Aretē in Homer," suggests that what Adkins classifies as ἀρετή is often honor, τιμη According to Finkelberg, τιμη not ἀρετή designates one's class. Finkelberg proposes that τιμη depends on co-operative excellences and that Adkins, who falsely equates τιμη to ἀρετή, underestimates the importance of these excellences. Furthermore, Finkelberg asserts that Homeric virtue cannot be privatized (20-24). As I lack the skill to determine whether *τιμ*η or ἀρετή is more fitting, I cannot contribute to this debate. However, since I argue that Protagoras's teaching is capable of being self-serving, Adkins's definition of Homeric virtue seems more plausible to me.

[34] Notably, Adkins recognizes that Homer extended ἀρετή to speech: "From the gods come all means of attaining to *aretai* for moral men: through their agency are men wise, *sophoi*, by nature, mighty of arm, and fluent of utterance" (*Merit and Responsibility* 159). In addition, the character of Odysseus may signify the importance of oration. While Achilles was defeated despite being gifted in battle, Odysseus returned to rule. Thus, one may propose that Homer valued rhetorical skill as equal to, if not greater than, the art of war.

maintain the arts of war (*Merit and Responsibility* 33). In this respect, Homeric virtue appears to focus on benefiting others and seems to extend beyond one's self.

2.2 Constituted by Success and Determined by Polis

Now to return to unpacking the Homeric virtue, its second feature is 2) that it is constituted by successfully executing competitive excellences. Since competitive excellences are measured by success of attaining competitive goods, Homeric virtue does not regard one's intentions and is permitted to be self-serving. Correspondingly, cooperative excellences, which depend on intentions, are considered second class. Since Homeric virtue dismisses cooperative excellences, it does not need to be concerned with the community's interests. Accordingly, Homeric virtue may be kept private and used for personal benefit.

Furthermore, according to Adkins, cooperative excellences' diminished rank is such that a Homeric hero only needs to practice competitive excellences, not cooperative ones. For example, despite the gods' displeasure with Achilles's treatment of Hector's corpse, Achilles remains *agathos* while dragging the body around the wall of Troy (Iliad xxiv. 53). Though Achilles acts impiously, Adkins defends that he remains virtuous (*Merit and Responsibility* 38). From this reasoning, Adkins permits that one who lacks cooperative excellences, such as one who acts unjustly, may still be Homerically virtuous.

Lastly, Adkins's third feature—3) Homeric virtue is determined by the *polis*—is twofold in meaning. First, as early explained, (i) a *polis*'s needs determine which competitive goods one ought to pursue. For instance, if a *polis* requires land for farming, then a virtuous man obtains the needed territory through war. Second, Adkins proposes that (ii) a *polis*'s opinion of one constitutes one's virtue (*Merit and Responsibility* 36). Adkins asserts that society's opinion,

demoi phatis, is the most important standard for measuring virtue: "The Homeric hero cannot fall back upon his own opinion of himself, for his self only has the value which other people put upon it" (*Merit and Responsibility* 49). For example, during a chariot race, Nestor advises that Diomedes retreat. Diomedes worries that Hector will proclaim that his retreat is a loss of virtue. In response to Diomedes's concern, Nestor proclaims that since the *polis* will not believe Hector, Diomedes may retreat without fear (Iliad viii. 147). Adkins views this incident as an indication that one's Homeric virtue depends on the public opinion of one, not on one's actions.

Since (ii) public opinion constitutes Homeric virtue, one's reputation is valued above one's actions. As reputation is the primary concern, Adkins posits that Homeric virtue "constitutes a shame-culture" (*Merit and Responsibility* 49, 154). In this shame society, "facts are of much less importance than appearances, and hence… intentions are of much less importance than results" (*Merit and Responsibility* 49). Thus, by valuing success and appearance, Homeric virtue, despite being III) determined by the polis, encourages one to sever one's private interests.

Section 3: Homeric or Democratic Virtue

Having explained the key features of Homeric virtue, consider how Protagoras' teaching of political rhetoric reflects this kind of virtue. On the surface, Protagoras's teaching of political rhetoric does not correspond with the first feature of Homeric excellence, being skilled in battle. However, I propose that political rhetoric is a modernized version of this excellence. Still, within his Myth, Protagoras upholds the third element of Homeric virtue, that it is III) determined by the *polis.*

Yet, the Myth of Protagoras also appears to divert from Homeric virtue in two ways: (I) virtue is given to all, and (II) justice and temperance are central to virtue. In response to these dissimilarities, I pause to entertain the possibility that Protagoras teaches democratic virtue, not Homeric. Within Protagoras's Myth, as well as the Great Speech and Theory of Punishment, Protagoras parallels democratic virtue in two ways: I) by giving virtue to all and (II) by prioritizing the roles of justice and temperance. In response to these claims, I propose that Protagoras's belief in different levels of virtue restricts it to the aristocrats, and his use of justice and temperance conforms to Homeric standards. Thus, I conclude that Protagoras's teaching aligns more closely with Homeric, not democratic, virtue.

3.1 A Preliminary Glance at Protagoras's Use of Homeric Virtue (320d-322e)

As far as Homeric virtue requires I) competitive excellences, particularly that of warfare, Protagoras's teaching of political rhetoric is not an exact match. As shown by Socrates's examples of speaking to the Assembly and Pericles's failure, clever political rhetoric exists in the Assembly, not on the frontlines of a war. Thus, instead of teaching one to dominate on the battlefield, Protagoras instructs one to captivate the Assembly. Still, the Assembly and battlefield hold two striking similarities. First, in both situations, one faces an opponent. Second, when engaging with an opponent, one's life may be at risk.[35] Perhaps the most famous case of a life being at stake in the Assembly would be Socrates's trial as told in Plato's *Apology.* Therefore, instead of teaching one techniques for physical combat, Protagoras trains one in the competitive excellence of verbal sparring. Furthermore, as the art of war depends on successfully besting an

[35] Socrates argues that one's life is at risk when speaking in the Assembly (*Theaetetus* 172e-176a).

opponent, clever political rhetoric is also II) constituted by successfully convincing one's audience. (I develop this point further in the final section.)

In his Myth, Protagoras applies Homeric virtue's third aspect, III) being constituted by the *polis,* to his teaching. In response to Socrates's claim that virtue is unteachable, Protagoras tells a myth of how cities came to be. The myth's narrative mirrors the third Homeric principle: III) society's (i) needs and (ii) common opinion constitute virtue. Protagoras follows the Homeric template, by insisting that a city requires his teaching of political excellence.[36] Political excellence is the only prevention that hinders those in cities from "scatter[ing] and again be[ing] destroyed" (322c).[37] As Homeric virtue is (i) determined by society's needs, a *polis* requires Protagoras's teaching. Second, Protagoras's Myth aligns with the Homeric belief that (ii) virtue emanates from and can be eradicated by others. Protagoras advances a society of shame by ensuring that Zeus gifts all with both justice and shame (322c). Under Zeus's decree, those who do not appear to possess political excellence ought to be ostracized and killed by their fellow citizens. Accordingly, Protagoras's teaching of political excellence, like Adkins's understanding of Homeric virtue, is III) constituted by a city's needs and determined by the *demoi phatis.*

[36] Adkins, in *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values,* states that political expertise is equivalent to the Homeric conception of *ἀρετή;* neither are moral, and both are determined by society's needs (227-228).

[37] Edward Schippa, in *Protagoras and Logos A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*, argues that the introduction of democracy ensured that ἀρετή was not limited to the elite class: "Under Periclean democracy a greater variety of people had opportunity to offer sound counsel in the assembly or to win fortunes in the popular courts, thereby proving their [virtue] and becoming [good]" (169-170).

3.2 Protagoras Promotes Democratic Virtue (322c-326c)

While aspects of the myths' narrative are in accordance with Homeric virtue, certain aspects, specifically (I) the claim that virtue is given to all and (II) the significance of justice and temperance, stand in stark contrast to it. While Adkins asserts that Homeric virtue belongs to the elite and that a virtuous person need not exercise cooperative excellences, like justice and temperance, Protagoras defends the idea that virtue is universal and posits that his teaching precedes entirely from justice and temperance (323a). These positions suggest that Protagoras may not offer a Homeric version of virtue. Instead, one may posit that his teaching is in accordance with a democratic conception of virtue.

According to A. Nathan, in "Protagoras's Great Speech," democratic virtue is (I) accessible to all and (II) "can be understood as the ubiquitous moral duty to law and custom … [, and is] less focused on success" (382).[38] Some argue that many sophists, including Protagoras, advance democratic virtue. To forward the claim that Protagoras champions democratic virtue, one may assert that I) Protagoras defies elitism and II) equates virtue to justice and temperance over the course of three sections: the Myth of Protagoras, the Great Speech, and the Theory of Punishment.[39] First, with regards to I) virtue's accessibility, in the Myth of Protagoras, Protagoras declares that justice be given to all; thus, he extends virtue to any member of society

[38] Please note, I do not intend for democratic virtue to sound either superior to Homeric virtue or equivalent to Socrates's depiction of virtue. After all, throughout Plato's works, Socrates offers several weighted arguments against democracy. First, Socrates proposes that virtue is inherently valuable, while democratic excellences, according to Schippa, "were not valued as intrinsically good but as being beneficial to the *polis"* (182). Second, under democracy, the practice of self-serving persuasion becomes more threatening. For further discussion about rhetoric's relationship to democracy, see Eugene Graver's, "Can Virtue be Bought?" Grave argues that democracy is ripe for an orator's exploitation.

[39] For further reading on the connection between the teachability of virtue and democracy, see Adkins's, "ἀρετή, τέχνη, Democracy and Sophists: Protagoras 316b-328d," Nathan's, "Protagoras' Great Speech," and Schippa's, *Protagoras and Logos A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric* (157-168, 175-180).

(322d). Then, in the Great Speech, Protagoras argues for the teachability of virtue (323a-325c). This claim is the underlying premise for democracy and boldly defies the Homeric tradition, in which virtue is reserved for the elite.[40]

Finally, Protagoras offers the novel perspective that punishment may be a form of education (323c-324a). Previously, punishment was regarded to be a kind of retribution or vengeance (Schippa 183). As a form of education, punishment entails a sense of improvement, which is contrary to the Homeric hierarchical system. Thus, from the Myth of Protagoras, the Great Speech, and the Theory of Punishment, Protagoras aligns with the democratic notion that I) virtue is accessible to all.

Likewise, one may assert that the Myth of Protagoras, the Great Speech, and the Theory of Punishment all elucidate that Protagoras's teaching, the virtue of political excellence, is really justice and temperance.[41] Since a democratic conception of virtue is something that is a *moral duty to law and custom*, one may bolster the argument by II) equating virtue with justice and temperance. In his myth, Protagoras articulates that Zeus's gifts of justice and shame are necessary for political excellence (322b).[42] Then, during his Great Speech, Protagoras asserts that "political excellence… must proceed entirely from justice and temperance" (323a). Again, in contrast to Homeric virtue, II) cooperative virtues are necessary for Protagoras's virtue of political excellence.

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[40] In *Protagoras and Logos A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Schippa proposes that a ubiquitous kind a virtue is paramount to the Athenian democratic system (171).

[41] In "Protagoras and Fifth Century Education," Schippa argues that Protagoras forwards democracy through his Myth, Great Speech and Theory of Education (181-187).

[42] See Oded Balaban's article, "The Myth of Protagoras and Plato's Theory of Measurement" (375), and Maguire's article, "Protagoras… or Plato? II. The 'Protagoras' (110), for further reading on Zeus's representation of justice.

Finally, amidst his Theory of Punishment, Protagoras once more II) equates virtue to justice and temperance. When explaining the role of punishment, he asserts that one who lacks virtue ought to be punished (323c-324a), while neither one who is ugly nor one who is weak warrants punishment. From this final argument, one may argue that Protagoras's virtue cannot refer to Homeric skill, such as clever political rhetoric: "for no one would be punished for lacking leadership skills or for failing to have a decorated political career" (Nathan 391). Instead, one may conclude that Protagoras's virtue refers to the previously listed democratic excellences of justice and temperance.

3.3 Protagoras Promotes Homeric Virtue (317a-b and Gorgias 452d-e)

In order to establish that Protagoras's teaching promises a modified version of Homeric virtue, one must prove that Protagoras 1) does not believe that virtue is accessible to all and 2) that his use of cooperative excellences confirms to Homeric virtue. First, to argue that Protagoras's virtue is reserved for an elite class, I provide support both from the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*. Within the *Protagoras*, Protagoras acknowledges differing levels of virtue on two occasions. Moreover, he restricts his teaching to the aristocrats by (i) charging a fee and (ii) holding selective gatherings. Yet, from the *Protagoras* it is not easily discernible whether the teaching of political rhetoric is inherently hierarchical.[43] By contrast, the *Gorgias* presents the clear argument that rhetoric may better the general *polis* and is capable of offering private benefit at the *polis'*s expense *(Gorgias 452d-e)*. From Gorgias's argument, one appreciates that a social

[43] Through Protagoras proposes that virtue may benefit one while harming another, this suggestion of hierarchy is murky: "I know many things that are disadvantageous to humans, foods and drinks and drugs and many other things, and some that are advantageous; some that are neither to humans but one or the other to horses…Or take olive oil, which is extremely bad for all plants and is the worst enemy of the hair of all animals except humans, for whose hair it is beneficial, as it is for the rest of their bodies" (334a-c).

hierarchy is intrinsic to rhetoric. These sections from the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* bolster the position that Protagoras 1) does not believe that virtue is accessible to all.

3.3.1 Virtue is Not Accessible to All (317a-b, 328b)

Within the *Protagoras,* Protagoras acknowledges a ranking of virtue on two occasions. First, when describing his teaching, Protagoras set forth the belief that a social hierarchy distinguishes the "powerful men in the cities… [from] the masses,…[who] perceive nothing, but merely sing the tune their leaders announce" (317a-b). Embedded in this account is the conception that virtue is reserved for the elite class. As only the powerful are able to exercise his teaching of political rhetoric and the masses simply *sing the tune* of the leaders, 1) Protagoras's virtue is not ubiquitous.

Second, Protagoras asserts there are different levels to his virtue. When he claims to be "uniquely qualified to assist others in becoming noble and good" (328b), he discloses the belief that not all are equally gifted at political rhetoric. Though he insists that virtue extends to all, he also stipulates that some are more virtuous than others.[44] By allowing for varying levels of virtue, Protagoras preserves the Homeric custom in which there is a hierarchy to virtue and 1) rejects the democratic propsition that virute is accesible to all.

Correspondingly, Protagoras perpetuates this hierarchy in two ways: (i) by charging a fee and (ii) by holding selective gatherings. Yet, it is not merely coincidence that only the rich can afford to study with Protagoras. Rather, the fee is a means of guaranteeing that only the powerful men are able to escape mindlessly singing the tunes of their leaders (317a-b). Second, by holding

[44] Schippa also recognizes that Protagoras believes that some may be more skilled than others. However, Schippa proposes that this ranking does not contradict democracy; rather, it permits great leaders, such as Pericles, to excel (181).

selective gatherings, Protagoras reinforces that only the elite may gain access to virtue. As shown by Hippocrates's roundabout invitation and the selective doorman (310c-d, 314d)—only one who is a *member of a great and well to do family* may study under Protagoras. Therefore, (i) charging a fee and (ii) restricting access to his gatherings are Protagoras's methods for perpetuating the Homeric tradition that only the aristocraticy may partake in virtue.

To further argue that a hierarchy persists through the art of rhetoric, consider Gorgias's exchange with Socrates. When asked what he teaches, Gorgias replies that he supplies the greatest craft: rhetoric. Then when pushed to explain what his teaching provides, Gorgias responds, "It is the source of freedom for humankind itself and at the same time it is for each person the source of rule over others in one's own city" (*Gorgias* 452d). From this reply, rhetoric leads to conflicting outcomes: (i) by offering freedom to the city, it provides a general good, and (ii) by giving rule to an individual, it ensures a hierarchy of power.

This passage marks persuasion's importance to rhetoric. In the absence of persuasion, disagreements would be resolved through battle. When force is the dominant mode of resolution, the strong often secure more for themselves than the weak. Likewise, when rhetoric is the weapon of choice, the more persuasive are able to bully the less convincing.[45] As persuasion is crucial to rhetoric and requires dividing the persuasive from the uncompelling, rhetoric by its nature brings about a hierarchy.

[45] See Graver's, "Can Virtue Be Bought?," for discussion on how persuasion thrives in democracy (355-356, 364-378).

3.3.2 Cooperative Excellences Conform to Homeric Virtue (323a-e)

To demonstrate how 2) Protagoras's usage of justice and temperance adheres to Homeric virtue, consider the two conditions under which Adkins proposes that Homeric virtue may be dependent on cooperative excellences, such a justice: (I) the means of justice is guaranteed—"An inevitable divine justice, dispensed in this life, is the essential foundation of morality" (*Merit and Responsibility* 164)—and (II) cooperative excellences serve as a means to one's virtue.[46] Through Protagoras's Myth and Theory of Punishment, Protagoras's teaching meets both of Adkins's criteria for connecting cooperative excellences with virtue. First, quite plainly, Protagoras's Myth satisfies the initial requirement—(I) justice be divine. By orchestrating Zeus to distribute the cooperative excellence of justice to all mankind, Protagoras ensures that the foundation of the quieter virtue is rooted in the gods and guaranteed for all.

To uncover how Protagoras's Theory of Punishment fulfills Adkins's second requirement, (II) that cooperative excellences are means to goodness, one must consider Protagoras's claim that all must appear to be just (323c). Through close examination of this argument, two features about the cooperative excellences of temperance and justice become evident: (i) temperance is shown to be a means for one's goodness and (ii) the appearance of justice is more valuable than authentic justice. Directly after asserting that "debate… [about] political excellence... must proceed entirely from justice and temperance" (323a), Protagoras launches into the argument that all must appear to be just. First, Protagoras argues that it is mad for one to pretend to be good at an art, if one is not skilled at it (323a-b). In this case, madness is

[46] Adkins, in *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*, notes that Simonides' poem, which Protagoras discusses, demonstrates that even if the gods declared that all be just, the gods would still favor strength and speed to cooperative excellences (165).

the opposite of temperance.[47] Then he asserts that it is mad for an unjust person to confess to be unjust. From this argument, it becomes recognizable that it is temperate to act unjustly.

Argument I (323a-b)

1. Madness/acting madly is the opposite of temperance/acting temperately.
2. If one is unjust and one pretends to be just, then one does not act madly.
3. If one is unjust and one pretends to be just, then one acts unjustly.
4. Therefore, one who acts unjustly may also act temperately.

This argument establishes that the previously named cooperative excellences of temperance and justice cannot be democratic virtues. First, (i) temperance is shown to be a means for enhancing one's private goodness. In Argument I temperance entails properly evaluating which outcome best serves one's interest (332a-e).[48] Granting that injustice harms one's city and that pretending to be just itself is an act of injustice, Protagoras's version of temperance benefits one's self while harming the *polis*.[49] Instead of entailing moderation, which democratic virtue would expect, temperance refers to a self-serving good.[50] In this manner—temperance is shown to be a means for attaining what is best for one's self— and Protagoras meets Adkins second requirement that (II) cooperative excellences serve as a means to one's virtue.

[47] Since all things that can have an opposite only have one opposite, I assume that madness remains the opposite of temperance (332d).

[48] In *Plato's Anti Hedonism and the Protagoras,* J. Clerk Shaw argues that Protagoras believes that it is prudent to pretend to be just, because injustice angers others. As such, being unjust puts one at risk of exile or death (Shaw 85). Here, Protagoras's concern is for one's physical well-being.

[49] Shaw, in *Plato's Anti Hedonism and the Protagoras*, proposes that if one's actions are unjust, then these actions harm a city's wellbeing (85).

[50] In "By What Is the Soul Nourished? On the Art of the Physician of Souls in Plato's Protagoras," Larsen writes that temperance is expected to be moderation, because moderation would be most beneficial to the survival of the city (93-94). Protagoras's usage of temperance seems more closely related to Homeric virtue, which may be used to benefit one's self. Moreover, the notion that temperance concerns measuring what is best for one's private interests exists in Homeric thought. Adkins writes, in *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*, the chorus exclaims to Prometheus, "it is [the greatest denigration, the greatest lack of ἀρετή] for a wise man, *sophos,* to make a mistake (about his own interest)" (159).

Second, Protagoras's argument that all must appear just indicates that (ii) the appearance of justice is more valuable than justice actions. Protagoras permits that it is prudent to use unjust methods to preserve one's reputaiton. As with Adkin's Homeric virtue, "facts are of much less importance than appearances" (*Merit and Responsibility* 49). Since Protagoras I) reserves virtue for the elite and his II) use of cooperative excellences conforms with both Homeric standards—he believes that temperance considers what is best for one's self, and values appearances above facts—his teaching does not promise a democratic virtue.

Section 4: Protagoras's Teaching

This final section offers responses to the three unanswered questions: 1) How can the teaching of political rhetoric be (i) temperance and (ii) justice? 2) What is the effect of Protagoras's teaching? 3) How is Protagoras's teaching a virtue? First, political rhetoric and (i) temperance both concern one's survival. Protagoras acknowledges that his profession is dangerous:

> "Jealousy, hostility, and intrigue on a large scale are aroused by such activity...the men who practiced it in ancient times, fearing the odium attached to it, disguised it,…used various arts as screens out of fear of ill will… [and] I admit that I am a sophist and that I educate men, and I consider this admission to be a better precaution than denial. And I have given thought to other precautions as well, so as to avoid, God willing, suffering any ill from admitting I am a sophist" (316d- 317c).

Similarly, his Myth reinforces that political rhetoric protects one from exile or death: "Death to him who cannot partake of shame and justice, for he is pestilence to the city" (322d).[51]

[51] For further discussion on how political rhetoric concerns one's life, see *Theaetetus* (172c).

As illustrated by Argument I—it is temperate to act unjustly—temperance is the ability to calculate how best to preserve one's physical well-being. Thus, sound deliberation, temperance, and political rhetoric all contribute to securing one's life.

Still, one may still wonder how Protagoras can call political rhetoric (ii) justice? Since Protagoras values the appearance of justice above acting justly, I venture that his propositions to teach justice (318b,322c, 323a) are actually pledges to advise one in appearing to be just. Again, from Argument I—one is encouraged to lie for the sake of appearing to be just—persuasive rhetoric is a means for perpetuating the appearance of being just. Furthermore, appearing to be just seems to be a constitutive feature for offering political rhetoric. It is difficult to imagine one who appears unjust and also offers clever and successful political rhetoric.[52] As such, the appearance of justice seems closely linked with, if not constitutive of, political rhetoric.

In response to the second question—2) what is the effect of Protagoras's teaching? —I look to Protagoras's belief that one's reputation for justice trumps just actions. Given this conception, it does not seem likely that Protagoras promises to better one by nurturing personal justice. Consequently, the more robust definition of βελτίων—a-moral duties which pertain to both civic and domestic matters—may be more appropriate. Furthermore, promising a teaching whose results improve one's basic duties as a citizen aligns with the art of rhetoric.

[52] As Protagoras asserts that his teaching depends on justice and that he teaches justice, successful political rhetoric requires that one appears to be just and results in making one appear to be just.

4.1 A Modified Version of Homeric Virtue

Finally, in response to the most serious question—3) How can Protagoras's teaching of political rhetoric be a virtue—I assert that Protagoras's teaching promises a modified version of Homeric virtue. Again, Homeric virtue is characterized by three features: I) it is composed of c*ompetitive excellences*, II) constituted by success and II) determined by the *polis*.

First, though slightly revised from the Homeric, Protagoras's teaching aligns with I) *competitive excellences*. Notably, a Homeric hero must possess three c*ompetitive excellences*: (i) skill in battle, (ii) descent from a noble lineage, and (iii) the possession of wealth and power. With regards to the first excellence, (i) skill in battle, Protagoras's teaching is not identical. Instead of teaching one to be skilled on the battlefield, Protagoras trains one for verbal combat in the Assembly. Yet, like the art of war, the competitive excellence of political rhetoric demands defeating one's opponent and concerns one's physical safety.

With regards to the Homeric hero's second quality, (ii) being descended from a noble lineage, Protagoras ensures that only the noblemen may partake in this virtue. By charging a fee and restricting his gatherings to the wealthy and powerful, Protagoras ensures that only the prestigious may acquire virtue. These regulations feed into the third *competitive excellence*, (iii) since a Homeric hero must be in possession of wealth and power. Only those who belong to a higher social class, which enjoys excess money and leisure, are invited to his talks and can afford to study under him. Clever political rhetoric may increase one's wealth and power, which a Homeric hero is expected to possess, and heighten one's political reputation, which fulfills Hippocrates's desire to gain political distinction.

Second, like Homeric virtue, Protagoras's teaching of clever political rhetoric is II) constituted by success. As demonstrated by Socrates's and Hippocrates's characterizations, Protagoras's teaching of rhetoric occurs in the Assembly and results in political distinction. When one pursues political distinction through rhetoric, the quality of one's speech depends on whether one successfully convinces one's listeners that one's speech is superior to that of one's political opponent.[53] If one's audience is persuaded, then one's speech is deemed to be skillful and clever, and one gains political distinction.[54] Stated formally:

Argument J

1. If one is a clever speaker, then one is successful.
2. If one is successful, then one's speech persuades others.
3. If one's speech persuades others, then one gains political distinction.[55]
4. Therefore, if one is a clever speaker, then one gains political distinction.

Finally, as Homeric virtue is III) determined by the *demoi phatis*, Protagoras's teaching depends on popular opinion. As shown in Argument J, the success of one's clever political rhetoric is determined by the city's reception. Indeed, a favorable appearance seems even more intrinsic to political rhetoric than it does to the traditional Homeric excellences. That is to say, while one who is considered to be a poor swordsman may win a fight, one who is perceived to be unjust cannot deliver a successfully persuasive speech about civic matters. As depicted in Protagoras's Myth, one's virtue is constituted by a city's opinion of one and determined by what

[53] Even if one does not have an obvious political opponent, one is against the many. Insofar as one must convince the many to agree with one, the many are one's opponent (*Theaetetus* 172e-176a, 201a-b).

[54] Please note, I am not arguing that political rhetoric is constitutive of political distinction. I am merely proposing that one naturally gains political distinction after delivering a successful speech in the Assembly.

[55] While having the reputation of being a political expert is necessary to being a political expert, reputation is not sufficient for being a political expert. As shown with Pericles, one who is not a political expert may have a good reputation, only to lose it later (*Gorgias* 515e-516a).

a city needs to survive. Lastly, Protagoras's belief that it is prudent to be unjust further supports the Homeric tradition that one's goodness may be self-serving.[56]

Closing

To continue to define Protagoras's teaching, one may compare and contrast it with Socrates's understanding of virtue. Protagoras's modified Homeric virtue and Socrates's conception of virtue hold two similarities:1) both focus on bettering one's self, and 2) both compare virtue to a skill, and, therefore, may be elitist. Yet, while Protagoras focuses on preserving one's life, Socrates is concerned with one's soul (313e-314b, 337a-b). Moreover, though both call virtue a skill, Protagoras pursues the competitive good of political distinction, while Socrates's quest for wisdom is not something which is zero sum in nature. Though both Protagoras's modified Homeric virtue and Socrates's virtue share a few resemblances, Socrates may launch a severe critique against Protagoras's teaching.

[56] In "Euboulia as the Skill Protagoras Taught," Paul Woodruff argues that Protagoras's *euboulia* benefits the *polis* (180). However, I agree with Nathan, "Protagoras' Great Speech," that Woodruff misconfigures rhetoric by removing persuasion (ft 17).

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Vita

In 2017, Mary Gatta graduated from St. Mary's College of California with a B.A. summa cum laude in Philosophy. During her time as an undergraduate, she concentrated on the philosophy of literature and Thomistic philosophy. Gatta is now a graduate student at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she serves as a teaching assistant and works towards an M.A. in Philosophy. Her current focus is ancient philosophy, especially Plato's middle dialogues. Concurrently, Gatta is also a graduate student at the Sewanee School of Letters. There, she pursues an M.A. in English Literature, and her primary research centralizes on Milton's pastoral elegies.