

## Chapter Two: What Does Protagoras Teach?

### 1. Eristic

One way for Protagoras to appeal to Hippocrates would simply be to offer himself as a teacher of rhetorical skill. If he were to do so, he could quite legitimately claim to be offering instruction that would further the political careers of his students. Hippocrates thinks that this is mainly what Protagoras can offer him. (312d) Furthermore, Protagoras must know that his ability to win rhetorical contests is one of the essential reasons that students are attracted to him. Thus, the expectations of his students require Protagoras to be a teacher of eristic, a subject Kerferd defines as “‘seeking victory in argument’, and the art which cultivates and provides appropriate means and devices for so doing.”<sup>1</sup>

Much of the dialogue reflects the fact that Protagoras embraces the role of eristic competitor and teacher. When, immediately prior to the Simonides episode, Socrates asks Protagoras to keep his answers brief, Protagoras explains in explicitly eristic terms his unwillingness to continue dialectical conversation with Socrates:

Socrates, I have had verbal contests with many people, and if I were to accede to your request and do as my opponent demanded, I would not be thought superior to anyone, nor would Protagoras be a name to be reckoned with among the Greeks. (335a)

While Protagoras may have other aims, he knows that he cannot allow himself to be shown inferior in rhetorical skill to Socrates. To show himself a good teacher (or at least better qualified than Socrates), he knows he must win the argument. That he regards winning as an aim in itself is demonstrated when he turns the discussion to poetry—this is a tactic intended merely to further his own chances of victory, not to further the discussion philosophically. What draws students to Protagoras is not solely (and perhaps not even primarily) his intellectual depth. To be an attractive teacher, Protagoras knows he must be able to show competence in the *sine qua non* of politics, oratory.

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<sup>1</sup> Kerferd [1981], p.62. Like Kerferd, I take eristic to be a branch of rhetoric.

To demonstrate this expectation on the part of Protagoras' audience, one may note that Alcibiades, an aspiring politician, sees the discussion in eristic terms and, so far as one can tell, only in eristic terms. Alcibiades here gives his own analysis of whether Protagoras ought to engage Socrates in dialectical conversation:

Socrates admits that long speeches are beyond him and concedes to Protagoras on that score. But when it comes to dialectical discussion and understanding the give and take of argument, I would be surprised if he yields to anyone. Now, if Protagoras admits that he is Socrates' inferior (*phauloteros*) in dialectic, that should be enough for Socrates. But if he contests the point let him engage in a question-and-answer dialogue... (336b-c)

This assertion makes sense only if Protagoras and Socrates are engaged in a merely eristic dispute. Alcibiades assumes that Socrates' only goal is winning the argument, that he has no point he actually wishes to make, and that thus a mere concession of eristic defeat from Protagoras would end the argument. Surely, such a concession would not satisfy Socrates at all. Similarly, Alcibiades thinks that the only reason Protagoras has to continue the discussion is to compete with Socrates. Never, it seems, does it occur to Alcibiades that resolving a substantial philosophical question might be the most important, or even an important, goal of the conversation.

## **2. *Euboulia***

One ought not to think, however, that Protagoras is merely presenting himself as an intellectually superficial teacher of eristic. To begin with, Plato's presentation of the sophist is decidedly sympathetic, especially when compared to Socrates' interlocutors in other dialogues. Protagoras enthusiastically answers questions concerning justice and virtue, the same questions which preoccupy Socrates. In this respect Protagoras stands in stark contrast to Gorgias, as Plato presents him in the dialogue to which he gave that sophist's name. Protagoras also never once heaps invective upon Socrates, as do Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias*. In contrast to many of Socrates' interlocutors in the early dialogues, Protagoras

appears to have good will towards Socrates and the sophist even professes some admiration for him at the end of the dialogue. (362d-e)

Perhaps Plato presents Protagoras as a more admirable character because of the sophist's greater awareness of and sensitivity to ethical problems. Protagoras is alive to the dizzying complexity of public affairs that an Athenian politician of this period would face, as outlined in the previous chapter. He knows that a successful politician will need to be able not only to speak cleverly on a variety of subjects, but also to make informed judgments concerning the state in any given situation.

Yet, given his superior awareness, what does Protagoras teach? To reiterate the conclusion of the previous chapter, Protagoras is unabashedly attempting to attract an aristocratic clientele—they are, after all, usually foremost among those who can pay his fees. For Protagoras to attract the kind of aristocrat Hippocrates represents, he must show that he teaches something beneficial for Hippocrates to know—beneficial either on grounds Hippocrates accepts or on grounds he could be brought to accept. Protagoras, however, does not attempt to give an explanation of the latter sort. Rather he states straightforwardly that his teaching addresses precisely the sorts of concerns that Hippocrates already has—Protagoras claims that “if [Hippocrates] comes to me he will learn only what he has come for.” (318e)

What has Hippocrates come for? Again, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Hippocrates “wants to be renowned in the city, and he thinks that this is most likely to happen if he associates himself with you.” (316c) All the other goals Hippocrates has articulated, if we are to trust Socrates' analysis, are subordinate to this aim. It is for the sake of this position he has come and Protagoras claims that he will not be disappointed.

With Hippocrates' concerns articulated thus by Socrates, Protagoras explicitly defines what he teaches:

What I teach is how to deliberate well (*to de mathema estin euboulia*), both concerning one's domestic affairs—how best to manage one's household, and concerning one's city—how to be most able to speak (*legein*) and to act (*prattein*) with respect to public affairs. (partly my own translation of 318e-319a)

How does learning this advance Hippocrates' goals? If Protagoras is truly addressing Hippocrates, the sort of sound deliberation Protagoras teaches should enable Hippocrates to know how to act in order to achieve his already specified end. As shown above, Protagoras goes out of his way to tell Hippocrates that he is not teaching something that requires him radically to revise his ends. Indeed, Protagoras takes care to describe his teaching in aristocratic terms and vocabulary. Hippocrates, Protagoras claims, will become *beltion*—literally, more noble (318a). Indeed, Protagoras' articulation of his subject has Homeric echoes, given that speaking (*legein*) and acting (*prattein*) were the ways in which Homeric heroes, who were very much ideological models for the aristocracy, traditionally displayed their prowess.<sup>2</sup> Protagoras offers teaching, he claims, that will allow members of the elite better to pursue traditional aristocratic ends. Does this mean that Protagorean practical deliberation merely concerns means and does not concern ends?

One need not see Protagoras as simply teaching the means to a conventionally prescribed end. Hippocrates' goal is extremely broad and complex—given the uncertain character of Athenian politics, there could be no simple or formulaic description of what constituted a successful political life. Thus Protagoras could claim that he would teach Hippocrates to be able to decide in any given situation precisely what constitutes success, how to balance all of the various and possibly competing elements that in some arrangement constitute a successful life.<sup>3</sup> However, despite such complexities, Protagoras is nevertheless committed to teaching something that should enable aristocratic youths like Hippocrates to live a previously desired, although vaguely specified, life of political success, one for which figures like Pericles are a conventional model.

While it is Socrates who first uses the word *arete* to describe what Protagoras teaches (319e), it seems right to say that Protagoras does claim to teach a virtue or excellence. The

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<sup>2</sup> We are told in the *Iliad*, for instance, that Peleus' goal in raising Achilles was to make him (through his tutor Phoenix) "a speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (*muthon te rheter' emenai prektera te ergon*). (9.443) Prof. David Porter very helpfully suggested this passage to me.

<sup>3</sup> Protagoras could claim, as have certain contemporary scholars, that end-specification could and might need to occur in practical deliberation. For a modern presentation of this point, see Wiggins [1975].

particular excellence that Protagoras and Hippocrates are here concerned with is the excellence by which Pericles and men like him achieved their prominence. Pericles was, of course, famous for his rhetorical skill. However, he was also widely admired for another sort of excellence, one which Aristotle, in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, will call *phronesis*: “It is for this reason that we think Pericles and men like him have *phronesis*, viz. because they can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general; we consider those who can do this good at managing households or states.” (1140b5-10)

It is this excellence that Protagoras claims to impart—the ability to determine, in any given circumstance, the most prudent course of action. This, both Protagoras and Aristotle claim, is the skill necessary to manage a household or city well. One must be able to approach the bewildering array of particulars with a capacity for sound judgement. This is the excellence through which Hippocrates would be renowned and honored as Pericles was.

### **3. Protagoras’ Great Speech and Accusations of Inconsistency**

After Protagoras thus initially indicates what he teaches, Socrates quickly replies with two arguments for the claim that what Protagoras claims to teach cannot be taught. (319a-320c) Protagoras responds to Socrates’ objections, defending his assertion that this excellence can be taught and elaborating his own view in his “great speech.”<sup>4</sup> (320d-328d)

Despite Plato’s sympathetic and intellectually impressive portrait of the sophist, a number of contemporary commentators charge Protagoras, who in his speech argues that virtue is teachable and that he teaches it, with a pernicious ambiguity or inconsistency in his conception of virtue. Arthur Adkins, in a paper entitled “Arete, Techne, Democracy and Sophists: *Protagoras* 316b-328d”, makes the most influential of these charges.

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<sup>4</sup> Protagoras’ great speech has often been received unfavorably by scholars. After chastising George Grote for being “deceived” by Protagoras’ speech, Theodor Gomperz describes the great speech as “a framework of confused and contradictory thought wrapped up in a covering of brilliant rhetoric.” (Gomperz [1905], p. 310) A. E. Taylor suggests that, while Protagoras succeeds in saying some things that are true about virtue, he also succeeds in refuting himself. (Taylor [1927], p. 243) Paul Shorey is a noteworthy exception from this trend—he argues instead that it is a passage “replete with valuable and surprisingly modern thoughts.” (Shorey [1933], p. 124) For additional scholarly criticisms of the speech, see below.

As in his larger work, *Merit and Responsibility*, Adkins in his article characterizes the history of Greek moral thought as an attempt to reconcile “competitive” with “cooperative” virtues. Adkins traces competitive virtues back to the Homeric poems, where *arete* had the straightforward sense of military prowess. In Plato’s Athens, one could still use *arete* in this traditional sense to commend those who displayed “competitive success-producing activity.”<sup>5</sup> This sort of *arete* was not primarily concerned with behavior towards others, but rather primarily with individual achievement. Here, excellence is the most appropriate translation for *arete*. “Quiet” or “cooperative” virtues, in contrast, are those virtues that help one to respect the desires and wishes of others and these virtues thereby further the interests of one’s community as a whole. Such virtue is also, by the fifth century, called *arete*. Unlike competitive virtues, cooperative virtues, such as justice and temperance, do not directly promote the success and flourishing of the individual that possesses them.

Socrates, on Adkins’s view, asks Protagoras whether competitive virtues, such as that virtue or excellence on account of which Pericles was successful, are teachable, and Protagoras responds by showing that community-strengthening cooperative virtues, such as justice and temperance, are teachable. This is not, Adkins argues, because Protagoras is confused by the multiple meanings of *arete*—rather he utilizes this linguistic ambiguity for his eristic purposes, intentionally confusing the matter himself.<sup>6</sup>

C. C. W. Taylor, in his commentary on the *Protagoras*, follows Adkins, as does Terence Irwin, in his *Plato’s Ethics*.<sup>7</sup> Taylor, furthermore, emphasizes that the ambiguity Adkins argues for can be seen as a tension between intellectual and non-intellectual parts of

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<sup>5</sup> Adkins [1973], p.4. For his distinction between cooperative and competitive virtues also see Adkins [1960], pp. 3-7.

<sup>6</sup> Adkins [1973] pp.9-10. J. S. Morrison had earlier made a similar claim: that Protagoras is exploiting an ambiguity in the phrase “good citizen”. He purposefully confuses being a good subject with being a good ruler. (Morrison [1941], p.8)

<sup>7</sup> Taylor writes that “in his defense of his claim against Socrates’ objections, [Protagoras] appears to shift his ground”, arguing for the teachability of virtues that make good cooperative citizens, when in actuality he claims instead to teach the competitive skills of a politician. For a fuller discussion of this claim, Taylor then refers the reader to Adkins’s article. (Taylor [1991], p.71) Irwin similarly claims that “it is not clear how far the abilities that promote an individual’s success are connected with the virtues of justice and shame...” (Irwin [1995], p.79) Irwin then provides a footnote referring to both Adkins and Taylor. Kahn also follows Adkins’s criticism of the great speech. (Kahn [1996], pp.217-218)

virtue. The skill that Pericles possessed and that Protagoras claims to teach is *euboulia*, excellence in practical deliberation. This is a cognitive virtue, one that involves a sort of skill or proficiency in thinking. In contrast, Taylor claims, Protagoras argues only that certain dispositions of character, such as temperance (having temperate desires), are teachable. According to this criticism Protagoras has not even shown that the right sort of virtue is teachable.<sup>8</sup>

Adkins, Irwin and Taylor, then, claim that Socrates has asked Protagoras to prove that a cognitive virtue (Taylor) that ensures political success (Adkins), *euboulia*, can be taught. In responding to Socrates, these commentators claim, Protagoras fails to argue that *euboulia* can be taught. Instead, he argues for the irrelevant claim that certain dispositions towards fair and respectful (i.e. cooperative) behavior can be taught. This strategy is eristically effective because both kinds of disposition can be referred to by the same word, *arete*.

However, Protagoras need not be read as relying on any sort of ambiguity in responding to Socrates' criticisms. One can reasonably read Protagoras as arguing in his great speech that the same thing he claims to teach is, in fact, teachable. As Protagoras uses them, *euboulia* and certain "cooperative" virtues, most importantly justice, are all cognitive, success-producing excellences. G. B. Kerferd simply reads Protagoras as identifying the *politike technē* (and presumably also *euboulia*) with supposedly less cognitive virtues (including justice).<sup>9</sup> However, I will argue that Protagoras advances a somewhat weaker claim: justice implies and requires a minimal degree of excellence in practical deliberation. *Euboulia*, a cognitive excellence, underlies justice.

In defending this claim, it will now be useful to summarize the objections to which Protagoras must respond. Socrates objects that excellence in deliberation cannot be taught. He gives two reasons for this view:

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor [1991], pp.81-83.

<sup>9</sup> Kerferd [1953], p. 43. Also see Kerferd [1981], pp. 142-145.

(1) In the assembly, the Athenians have a consistent and reliable procedure for recognizing those individuals who are experts and whose advice is therefore to be trusted with respect to technical matters. This procedure consists of recognizing those and only those who have acquired the requisite knowledge through the appropriate teaching concerning the technical matter at hand. However, the Athenians allow every citizen to speak concerning what general ends the city should pursue and how it ought to pursue them—they do not require individuals giving such advice to undergo any kind of training resulting in knowledge. Socrates claims that they do not recognize such requirements because they think there is no teaching of this sort one could come by—there is no possible training for excellence in deliberation. If such training is possible, Socrates assumes, it would be available. Since it is not available, its impossibility seems to follow. (319b-e)

(2) Individuals whom the Athenians do recognize as experts in practical deliberation (although not on the basis of training), such as Pericles, do not themselves seem able to teach their excellence to others. The important assumption here seems to be that if anyone could teach *arete*, it would be men like these. If such men could teach their sons to be virtuous, they of course would do so. However, since the sons of such individuals often turn out to lack skill in practical deliberation, it follows that their fathers were not able to teach them. Since men like Pericles cannot teach *arete*, it is not teachable. (319e-320b)

To put it briefly, Protagoras responds to these objections by claiming that, in order to live in a political community at all, everyone must have the virtues of justice (*dike*) and shame (*aidos*) and that these virtues are taught. It is at this point that Adkins and the rest find an inconsistency in Protagoras' position, claiming that *dike* and *aidos*, being cooperative, predominantly non-intellectual dispositions, are virtues of a fundamentally different sort from *euboulia*, a cognitive, success-producing virtue.

In what follows, I shall speak mostly of *dike* (or *dikaiosune*). Protagoras himself focuses primarily on *dike* and only mentions *aidos* in the context of his mythical narrative. Thereafter he occasionally mentions *sophrosune* (323a, 325a) and piety (*to hosion*) (325a,



325d). It is clear, however, that he is primarily interested in showing *dikaiosune* to be teachable—and this is all he needs to do to answer Socrates’ objections.

Nevertheless, Protagoras’ use of *aidos* requires some comment. The pair of *dike* and *aidos* appears to have poetic connotations, alluding to the Homeric and Hesiodic pair of *nemesis* and *aidos*. In the Homeric poems, one balanced one’s own needs with the needs of others by refraining from certain acts on account of shame (*aidos*) and by seeking restitution from others when one felt a sense of righteous anger (*nemesis*) against them.

Protagoras, with the use of *aidos*, may be very broadly emphasizing the self-regarding and controlling aspect of compromise in a community. *Dike*, which had an early meaning of “punishment”, could then emphasize the other-regarding side of the equation. The parallel is, of course, not precise.

However, there is another similarity that suggests that Protagoras is alluding to Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (201), where the departure of *nemesis* and *aidos* signals the final degeneration of human civilization—these two social sentiments, Hesiod thinks, are essential for human society, just as Protagoras insists that without possessing *dike* and *aidos* human beings are unable to live in a political community at all.

Leaving aside *aidos*, then, are the virtues (*dike*, *dikaiosune*, *sophrosune*) which Protagoras claims are teachable also cooperative and predominantly non-intellectual virtues? First of all, it is important to note that nothing about the very words Protagoras uses necessarily indicates that he is speaking of non-cognitive virtues. As Kenneth Dover points out, the Greeks tended to emphasize the intellectual aspects of virtue (even moral virtue) more than we do today.<sup>10</sup> Dover notes that Isocrates praises Pericles as the most *sophron*, *dikaios* and *sophos* man of his time, when Isocrates is not at all praising Pericles for having any kind of non-intellectual character virtue, but rather praising “his ability to understand and handle political situations with foresight.”<sup>11</sup> Dover also notes that *sophron* and *sophos* can even often be used

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<sup>10</sup> Dover [1974], p.117.

<sup>11</sup> Dover [1974], p.121.

to describe the same aspect of the same conduct.<sup>12</sup> Protagoras, then, is not simply speaking of predominantly non-intellectual virtues on account of his vocabulary.

How, then, can *dike* be understood as an intellectual virtue in the context of Protagoras' speech? Engaging in just behavior (possessing *dike*), for Protagoras, is itself an example of exercising *euboulia*, of coming to a prudent decision through sound practical deliberation. Underlying (and implied by) the justice of an individual is that individual's ability to deliberate with (at least) a minimal degree of success.

In Protagoras' speech, there is an explicit reason why human beings must practice justice and possess shame: in order to survive, specifically to fight off wild animals, human beings must come together in a city. In order to live in a city, however, human beings must be able to live together without continuously harming (*adikein*) one another. (322b) Zeus, Protagoras tells us, allowed human beings to practice the political *techne* and thus possess justice—as Prometheus allowed human beings to practice the crafts (*demiourgikai technai*) (321d)--in order that the human race might achieve its end (fighting off wild beasts) and thereby avoid extinction. (322c-d)

Presumably the need to fight off wild beasts can stand for all sorts of desires, needs and goals to satisfy which living a political life is necessary. There are undoubtedly a great number of desires, for us today no less than for the ancient Athenians, which one cannot satisfy in isolation. Support of and interaction with other human beings and a larger community is necessary for a great number of the activities that form a part of a happy and flourishing life. In order to partake of these activities, then, we need to be able to live, and derive benefit from living, in a political community. However, we must be able to balance pursuing our own benefit with respecting the needs and desires of others and the aims of the community as a whole. We need to be able to rank our goals in order of preference and to forego some of our desires in deference to the wishes of others—who, if they are to remain a part of our community, must at least occasionally do the same for us. If we do not sufficiently respect the desires of others, we will in some way

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<sup>12</sup> Dover [1974], pp.121-3.

be rejected by or expelled from the community in which we live—if we are not at least minimally just we cannot engage in the political life.

Thus, in order to derive the benefits of living in a political community, we must be able to decide on a course of action in any given instance that does not incur the wrath of our fellow citizens. We must decide which of our desires we most want to fulfill, and thus to insist upon, in the company of our fellow human beings. We must be able to recognize those situations in which we can reasonably realize our goals and those situations where, due to the needs and plans of others, the difficulty is too great. This sort of activity is an excellent example of complex practical reasoning. It is no small skill to be able to avoid the hostility of one's neighbors and respect their goals while still resolutely and competitively pursuing one's own projects. This must have been all the more difficult in Athens, where such activities could relatively easily result in exile or death, as Protagoras is careful to note. (325b) Therefore, if an Athenian can avoid banishment and participate in the political life of the city, then such an Athenian must possess at least some small amount of skill in practical reasoning. Such an Athenian will, at least to some extent, be both just (*dikaios*) and good at practical deliberation.

Protagoras, then, need not be interpreted as speaking of something primarily non-intellectual by *dike*. On the contrary, being *dikaios* requires and implies a certain cognitive capacity—the ability to deliberate successfully on how to navigate a human political community. Nor need Protagoras be interpreted as speaking of a cooperative virtue whose primary function is to strengthen the community. Rather, one who is *dikaios* derives from just behavior no small amount of personal benefit.

Protagoras claims that an education in justice is an intellectual education,<sup>13</sup> one that results in good understanding or intelligence (*dianoia*). (326b) In the course of their education,

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<sup>13</sup> It may be objected that Protagoras' emphasis on musical education (326a-c) indicates that he views education as instilling predominantly non-intellectual virtues. However, I would not claim that Protagoras thinks that there is absolutely no non-cognitive element in justice and the rest of virtue. My claim is merely that being just crucially implies an intellectual excellence. Having said this, however, it is also clear that musical education is not the central focus of Protagoras' account of education. The Athenians are centrally concerned through punishment to educate their young on what sorts of behavior are acceptable in their society. This is, as I argue below, an intellectual education.

the Athenians are made aware, first by their parents and early teachers, that if they act against the wishes of their fellow citizens, they will incur their anger and receive punishment. If a child fails to pay heed to the desires of its parents, they will “straighten” (*euthounisin*) their child. (325d) The purpose of this sort of punishment (and punishment in general) is to deter the one punished and those witnessing the punishment from the crime in question. (324b-c) Punishment, on Protagoras’ account, educates us in the ways that one can offend and anger others. Through being punished or witnessing punishment, one can come to judge what desires one can pursue without incurring the hostility of others and which one must give up due to the threat of communal anger.

Protagoras likens Athenian education to a series of “straightenings” (*euhynai*) (326d-e)--the legal term for public hearings undertaken in Athens for magistrates at the end of their terms to determine whether, in a general sense, they have behaved in an acceptable fashion. Education, Protagoras thus claims, is a series of examinations in which one learns what one may do while maintaining the good will of one’s community.

Protagoras explicitly takes *dike* to be the same sort of virtue as *euboulia*. In response to Socrates’ second objection, Protagoras admits that it would indeed be strange if the most excellent men with respect to *euboulia* were not able to impart any degree of their excellence to their sons. However, Protagoras argues, even the worst sons of virtuous men must have some small share of virtue if they successfully live in a political community. If these sons are merely just and not prominent in their city, this is because they do not have the natural aptitude to excel in the political art. A master flute player ought to be able to teach his son how to play the flute, even if his son doesn’t have the aptitude to be a virtuoso. (326e-328a) Here, then, Protagoras explicitly takes being *dikaios* as being evidence of possessing *euboulia*. Both being *dikaios* and attaining a preeminent position in politics show that one is good at practical deliberation, that one possesses the excellence of *euboulia*. Father and son both have shown themselves good at practical deliberation—the father is simply far more excellent in this respect.

If Protagoras' arguments that all possess virtue by teaching and not by nature are successful, a point I will not address here, then he has indeed shown that the sort of thing he professes to teach, sound practical deliberation about how to manage your life in light of your desired ends, is teachable. However, has Protagoras shown that he will produce the next Pericles?

Adkins complains that while Protagoras may have shown that in order to possess the political skill of a Pericles, it is necessary to be just (since even Pericles must be a member of his political community), he has not shown that being just is sufficient for having the sort of political prominence Hippocrates desires.<sup>14</sup> However, Protagoras clearly does not intend to claim that being just (and having sufficient proficiency in practical deliberation for being a member of political community) would be sufficient for attaining a preeminent position in Athens. He does not intend to teach justice at all—since his prospective student is a citizen of Athens, Protagoras must assume he already is just. Protagoras is instead offering to improve Hippocrates' capacity for sound deliberation beyond the extent to which he already possesses it, simply by virtue of being an Athenian citizen.

However, Protagoras would claim that not every student of his should be expected to attain (through his instruction) a position of extreme importance in the city—not every student who can pay his fee will necessarily have more than an average aptitude for the political art and an extremely high aptitude is necessary for the conspicuous excellence Hippocrates desires. (326e-328a) Protagoras can consistently claim that he will enable every student to achieve his or her highest possible level of virtue. If someone with the aptitude of a Pericles comes along, Protagoras would provide the necessary instruction for him to realize his potential.

It is fair to say that Protagoras has not yet shown by what methods he will produce men of great prominence in Athenian society. However, in the eristic context of the dialogue, this was not required of him. From an eristic standpoint, Protagoras need merely answer Socrates' objections. In this endeavor, he is far more successful than he is usually given credit for.

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<sup>14</sup> Adkins [1973], pp.9-10.