PLATONIS PROTAGORAS

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WITH INTRODUCTION NOTES AND APPENDICES

BY

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PREFACE.

THE present edition of the Protagoras is on the same lines as the Pitt Press editions of the Apology, Crito, and Euthyphro.

The Editors venture to hope that the study of this delightful dialogue, for which much has already been done in English by Mr Wayte and more recently by Mr Turner, may be still further encouraged by the publication of this edition.

Mr Neil, of Pembroke College, has kindly read through the proofs, and contributed various criticisms and suggestions.

CAMBRIDGE,
July 26, 1893.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN this edition a few errors and misprints have been corrected, but we have not thought it necessary or desirable to introduce any further changes.

EMMANUEL COLLEGE,
September 28, 1905.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Protagoras of Plato is one of the few dialogues whose authenticity has never been called in question by any eminent scholar. None of the dialogues attributed to Plato is so full of fallacious reasoning; perhaps none contains an ethical theory so difficult to reconcile with ordinary Platonic teaching; but the extraordinary vivacity and power of the dramatic representation, as well as the charm of style, have furnished proofs of authenticity which even the most sceptical critics have been unable to resist.

§ 1. *Analysis.*

A brief analysis of the Protagoras will form a fitting introduction to the discussion of its scope and purpose.

Socrates narrates the dialogue to a friend (309 A—310 A).

Hippocrates had visited Socrates in great excitement at an early hour, in order to obtain from him a personal introduction to Protagoras, who had just arrived in Athens. In the interval before they set out, Socrates subjected his young friend to an interrogatory, which forced him to admit that he was

about to entrust his soul to a sophist, without knowing what a sophist really is. Such a course of action Socrates declared to be perilous in the extreme (310 A—314 C). Socrates and Protagoras presently proceeded to the house of Callias, where Protagoras was staying, and having with some difficulty obtained admittance, found themselves spectators of an animated scene, in which Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus are the leading figures (314 C—316 A).

At this point the true business of the dialogue begins. After Hippocrates has been introduced to Protagoras, the latter delivers a speech claiming for his profession a high antiquity. Poets, religious teachers, musicians and others who were in reality 'Sophists', have vainly tried to disguise themselves by other names: Protagoras has found it both more prudent and more honest to profess himself openly that which he is, a Sophist and Educator of men. Prodicus and Hippias with their respective adherents assemble to hear Protagoras publicly explain the advantages of his teaching (316 A—317 E).

Aided by a little Socratic questioning, Protagoras explains that his art consists in making men good citizens. Socrates professes to have thought that civic virtue could not be communicated by teaching, and that on two grounds: first, because the Athenians do not think it can, since they allow any man to advise them in matters connected with the state without requiring from him evidence that he has been taught, whereas they will only listen to an expert when they are deliberating on matters connected with the arts: and second, because as a matter of fact, great statesmen have not succeeded in transmitting

their civic virtue to their sons and wards (317 E —320 C).

The reply of Protagoras is in the form of a ῥῆσις and falls into three sections.

In the first he endeavours to justify the Athenians for permitting any one to give counsel on politics, by relating a myth of pre-historic man, according to which no one is destitute of the foundations of civic virtue, Justice and Shame (320 C—323 A). That every man has part by nature in this virtue is, moreover, a universal belief, for he who publicly declares himself to be wicked is universally looked upon as mad (323 A—323 C).

Protagoras next endeavours to prove that the Athenians regard virtue as capable of being taught. In the first place, we hold men responsible for lacking that only which it was in their power to acquire, and we hold them responsible for their wrong-doing (323 C—324 A). Punishment, in the second place, is intended both by the Athenians and by all other men to be a means of teaching virtue (324 A—324 D).

Finally, Protagoras addresses himself to the question—why do not the sons of great statesmen possess the same virtue as their fathers? It is not from lack of teaching: for it would be absurd to suppose that statesmen teach their sons everything except the one thing needful for life as a citizen, and in point of fact, virtue is taught at every stage of human life—by parents, nurses, tutors, professional teachers for soul and body, and finally by the state herself, through the medium of the laws and the punishment which their violation entails. But children are often inferior to their parents in the capacity

for learning, and it is for this reason that they seem to fall short in civic virtue, although, compared with untutored savages, even the worst products of civilization might seem models of morality. Protagoras concludes by declaring himself a teacher of virtue and explaining his method of taking fees (324 D—328 D).

After thanking Hippocrates for bringing him to hear so fine a display, Socrates requests the Sophist to explain a matter which he had left obscure—Are the single virtues each of them parts of virtue, or only different names for one thing? They are parts of virtue, says Protagoras, in answer to the cross-examination of his rival, distinct from each other and the whole, as the parts of the face are different from the whole face and from one another. In number they are five—justice, temperance, holiness, courage, and wisdom, and wisdom is the greatest of them. We may possess one without possessing all the five. Each has its own peculiar efficacy and no one of them is like another (328 D—330 B).

Socrates endeavours in the first instance to make Protagoras admit that justice and holiness are identical, or nearly so. It is admitted that justice is just and holiness holy: but if justice and holiness do not resemble each other, justice will not be holy, but unholy, and holiness will not be just, but unjust—a conclusion which the Sophist rejects. Protagoras graciously concedes that there may be a considerable resemblance between justice and holiness, without however allowing that the two virtues are alike (330 B—332 A).

The next step in the argument seeks to establish the identity of temperance and wisdom. ἀφροσύνη,

Protagoras admits, is the opposite of σοφία, and nothing can have more than one thing which is opposed to it. ἀφροσύνη is however opposed to σωφροσύνη, as well as to σοφία; from which it follows that σοφία and σωφροσύνη are nothing but two names for one and the same thing (332 A—333 B).

If Socrates had also proved the identity of temperance and justice, four out of the five virtues would have been equated, but as he embarks upon his argument, Protagoras seizes the opportunity to plunge into a ῥῆσις on the relativity of the notion 'good' or 'beneficial' (333 B—334 C).

Here ensues an interlude, in which Socrates protests against his rival's lengthy speeches, and threatens to depart. At last, in deference to the entreaties of Callias, backed up by some remarks from Alcibiades, Critias, Prodicus, and Hippias, Socrates consents to stay, on condition that Protagoras shall first question him and afterwards submit to be questioned in his turn (334 C—338 E).

Protagoras proposes for criticism a poem of Simonides, remarking that the subject of the discussion will still be ἀρετή, though it is transferred from human conduct to the sphere of poetry. A good poem, Socrates admits, will not contradict itself: but Simonides, after asserting that it is hard to become good, proceeds in this poem to censure Prodicus for saying 'It is hard to be good'. That Simonides contradicts himself, Socrates denies, on the ground that 'to be good' is not the same as 'to become good': perhaps Simonides agreed with Hesiod in the view that it is hard to become, but easy to remain, good. Your cure is worse than the disease,

replies Protagoras: it would be the height of folly to call being good an easy thing. Socrates thereupon, with Prodicus' approval, at first suggests that 'hard' may mean not 'difficult', but 'evil', since the word 'hard'—so says Prodicus the Cean—means something evil in Ceos; but soon abandoning these sophistries he volunteers to give a continuous exposition of the poem (338 E—342 A).

Sparta and Crete are in reality the chief seats of philosophy in Greece, though they try to conceal the fact. The wise men of old knew this and in imitation of the Spartans compressed their wisdom into short and pithy sentences, one of which was the saying of Pittacus 'It is hard to be good'. Simonides wrote his poem to overthrow this maxim (342 A—343 C).

Socrates proceeds to support his theory of the poem by an exposition conceived (as will be afterwards shewn[1]) in the most sophistical spirit, but he correctly apprehends the central idea, viz. that in a world where it is not hard, but impossible to be good, we should not expect too much in the way of moral excellence (343 C—347 A).

The exposition of the poem being finished Socrates expresses himself disparagingly on the value of poetical criticism as a means of arriving at the truth, and the original question is resumed with Socrates for interrogator, as before. Conceding all that Socrates has hitherto been trying to prove, viz. that justice, holiness, wisdom and temperance are of the same kind, Protagoras takes his stand upon the sole remaining virtue and denies that courage bears any resemblance to the other four. By way of reply,

[1] p. xxvii.

Socrates draws a distinction between θάρρος with knowledge, and θάρρος without knowledge, and endeavours to identify the former with courage. The proof which he offers is far from conclusive[1], as Protagoras points out: it is therefore dropped and a subtler train of reasoning now begins (347 A—351 B).

To the proposal of Socrates, that pleasure should be identified with good, and pain with evil, Protagoras is unwilling to assent. He allows however that knowledge and wisdom, whenever they are present in a man, control his impulses and determine his conduct. But how is this to be reconciled with the common belief that a man having knowledge of that which is better, does the worse, because he is overcome by pleasure? In what sense are pleasures thus called evil? It is shewn that pleasures are called evil when they are followed by pain, and pains good when they are followed by pleasure, but pleasure in itself is good and pain in itself is evil. To be overcome by pleasure is therefore to be overcome by good: but as the phrase implies a censure, it is evident that the good which overcomes is unworthy to overcome the evil. Unworthy the good can only be because there is less of it: from which we infer that 'to be overcome by pleasure' is to choose less in place of greater good. Such a choice can only be the result of ignorance, so that it is incorrect to say that we ever knowingly choose the worse, and pleasure may still be identified with good, pain with evil (351 B—357 E).

Socrates now makes use of this identification to prove that knowledge and courage are the same. If pleasure is good, so likewise is every action which

[1] See note on 349 E.

aims at pleasure: and as no one knowingly chooses evil rather than good, no one ever does that which he knows to be evil. Now fear is the expectation of evil, so that no one, neither the hero nor the coward, encounters that which he believes to be fearful. It follows that the coward who refuses to fight when he ought to fight, refuses by reason of his ignorance. In other words cowardice is ignorance, and therefore courage, its opposite, is knowledge (358 A—360 E).

It is pointed out in conclusion that whereas Protagoras had started by maintaining that virtue could be communicated by teaching, and Socrates by doubting whether it could, they have now changed places: since if virtue is knowledge, it can be taught, but otherwise not. Socrates expresses a desire to resume the subject after he has discovered what virtue is in itself (360 E—362 A).

It appears from the preceding analysis that the Protagoras falls naturally into these sections:

I. Introduction to the narration of the dialogue (309 A—310 A).

II. Introduction to the dialogue itself (310 A—317 E).

III. Protagoras' description of his profession, followed by the objections of Socrates (317 E—320 C).

IV. A ῥῆσις from Protagoras, containing both μῦθος and λόγος (320 C—328 D).

V. Cross-examination of Protagoras by Socrates, ending abruptly with a short ῥῆσις by Protagoras (328 D—334 C).

VI. Interlude (334 C—338 E).

VII. Cross-examination of Socrates by Protagoras, ending with a ῥῆσις by Socrates (338 E—347 A).

VIII. Conclusion of the cross-examination of Socrates by Protagoras, and final defeat of the Sophist (347 A—360 E).

IX. Epilogue (360 E—362 A).

§ 2. *The General Scope and Purpose of the Protagoras.*

In seeking to understand the scope and purpose of the Protagoras, we shall find it convenient, in the first instance, to view the form of the dialogue as far as possible apart from the matter.

Considered as to its form, the dialogue is an indictment primarily of Protagoras as an educator of young men. It is not however as an individual that Protagoras is attacked, but as the most distinguished representative of the Sophists[1]: ὁμολογῶ τε σοφιστὴς εἶναι, he says in 317 B, καὶ παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπους; and before Protagoras appears on the scene, Plato is careful to instruct us as to the nature of that which was called 'Sophist'. Prodicus and Hippias, as well as Protagoras, receive their share of ridicule[2], and may be supposed to suffer with him in so far as the aim and method of their teaching agreed with his, although they are not directly associated with him in his fall[3], which, as rivals[4] in the profession, they doubtless viewed with something more than equa-

[1] 312 C ff., 316 D ff.
[2] 315 C ff., 337 A ff., 337 C ff., 347 A.
[3] Socrates himself expressly separates them off in 359 A.
[4] 318 E, 340 B ff., 341 A ff.

nimity[1]. It is part of the irony of the situation when Prodicus and Hippias fail to see that whereas in the actual discussion it is only Protagoras who is worsted, the attack is in reality directed against the professional Sophist in general—the *ἔμπορός τις ἢ κάπηλος τῶν ἀγωγίμων ἀφ' ὧν ψυχὴ τρέφεται*[2].

Pitted against Protagoras, as the representative of the Sophists, we find, as usual, Socrates. Whether in this case we are to regard Socrates as speaking for Plato or for himself, we shall presently inquire: in the meantime, it is well to notice one particular aspect in which the contrast presents itself. Protagoras represents the principle of *μακρολογία*, Socrates that of *βραχυλογία*: the former excels in continuous discourse, the latter in the method of investigation by question and answer. In the only section of the dialogue where Socrates deserts his usual method, in order to deliver a harangue upon the poem of Simonides, he expressly asserts that the method of Protagoras is futile[3], and it must be admitted that he is himself, whether intentionally or not, altogether unsuccessful in applying it.

In its formal aspect, therefore, the Protagoras may be regarded as an attempt to shew the superiority of

[1] In 341 A ff. Prodicus furnishes Socrates with weapons against his rival: and in 358 A—359 A they lend their assent to the train of reasoning by which Protagoras is finally overthrown. Bonitz (Platonische Studien p. 260) is surely wrong in regarding their assent to Socrates' counter-reasoning as a proof that they too are refuted: what is refuted is the statement that courage is different from the other virtues—a statement to which they never assented.

[2] 313 C.

[3] 347 E. Compare Bonitz l.c. pp. 260—262.

Socrates to Protagoras—of dialectic to continuous discourse. But the dialogue is not merely a "philosophical prize-fight": the subject-matter of the dispute between the rival interlocutors is one of great importance for the theory of education. It is first expressly raised in 319 A: Can virtue be communicated by teaching? If not, education, as it was understood by Socrates no less than by Protagoras, is impossible. The doubts expressed by Socrates upon the subject nowhere throughout the dialogue amount to a denial of what every self-respecting teacher must hold to be true: that the Athenians do not think virtue teachable proves nothing, as they may be mistaken: that Athenian statesmen do not teach it to their sons may prove only that it cannot be taught by Athenian statesmen[1]. But the reasons adduced by Socrates against the view that virtue can be taught are judiciously chosen in order to drive Protagoras into a defence of his position. Protagoras was not only professionally a teacher of virtue, and therefore bound to hold that virtue could be taught, but as the representative of the Sophists, he was bound to maintain that the beliefs and practice of the Arch-Sophist of them all, the Athenian Demus[2], were in harmony with his own. Accordingly he meets Socrates with a flat denial—the Athenians do hold virtue to be teachable and teach it in a multitude of ways. It is possible to hold this view and still believe that the elements of virtue are present by nature in every man, as Protagoras also asserts: and such was no doubt in reality the belief of the Athenians, as it is perhaps of the ordinary practical man in all ages.

[1] 319 A—320 B.
[2] See Rep. VI 492 A ff.

Plato's own view of education as the development of the faculties innate in soul may itself be regarded as the psychological counterpart of this ethical creed. But there still remains the question, what must we suppose virtue to be, in order that it may be taught? It is here that Socrates differs from the Athenians and Protagoras. Virtue, according to Socrates, can only be communicated by the teacher if it is identical with knowledge, and to prove this identity the whole of the dialogue from 329 C, with the partial exception of the section on the poem and of the interlude in 333 B—338 E, is devoted. The conclusion to be drawn is that Virtue can indeed be taught, but not by the Sophists, any more than by the educational system, public opinion, and laws of the Athenians, because in them there is no knowledge.

In connexion with this conclusion, we naturally ask: If virtue is not taught by the Sophists, how is it to be taught? To this question the dialogue itself furnishes an implicit answer. Inasmuch as virtue is knowledge, it must be taught by dialectic, the only means by which knowledge can be communicated. The method of Socrates, which it is the object of the formal side of the dialogue to represent as triumphant over the Sophistic μακρολογία, is to be understood as the method which will succeed where Sophistic has been shewn to fail. It is thus that form and matter are reunited and the dialogue attains its unity as a work of art.

§ 3. *On the myth of Protagoras.*

So much it was needful to say about the central theme of the dialogue, but there remain three episodes which call for special discussion, partly from their connexion with the subject of the whole, and partly on account of their substantive philoso phic value.

The first of these is the myth of Protagoras. The place of this episode in the argument is to shew that the Athenians do right in permitting all and sundry to advise them on political questions. It is not unlikely that the introduction of the mythical form as a vehicle of exposition was due to Protagoras[1]. There can at all events be no doubt that it was rapidly coming into favour in the literary circles of the day, and that it was sometimes employed not only by the so-called Sophists[2], but by the other Socratic schools[3] as well as the Academy. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that the myth with which we are concerned was written by Protagoras himself. The style shows many marked peculiarities of the kind which we should suppose that Protagoras affected[4], and although this might be set down to Plato's skill as an imitator, it is difficult to see why Plato should have taken such pains to imitate where he manifestly did

[1] Dümmler's Akademika p. 236.
[2] See note on ch. XI. ad init.
[3] As for example the Cynics: see Dümmler l.c. p. 1 foll.
[4] See on 320 E.

not intend to caricature[1]. Zeller[2] has recently lent the weight of his authority to the view which we are advocating, and an Italian scholar[3] has made it seem probable that the work from which this fable is taken had among other motives the polemical one of maintaining against the theories of Hippias and his followers the superiority of νόμος to φύσις. In the catalogue of Protagoras' works preserved by Diogenes Laertius[4], two books are mentioned, in either of which the fable may have occurred, περὶ πολιτείας and περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως: most probably it formed part of the latter.

We have commented in detail in the notes upon the subject-matter of the myth: but its general bearings and literary connexions require to be noticed here.

We may say broadly that two views of early society were current in antiquity. On the one hand the *laudator temporis acti* loved to represent the past as a golden age, from whose glories we have fallen away:

[1] Grote (II p. 47) perhaps states the case too strongly when he says that the fable is "fully equal, in point of perspicuity as well as charm—in my judgment it is even superior—to any other fable in Plato": but hardly any one will now deny that the episode is one of the most valuable and interesting parts of the dialogue. It should be borne in mind that the fable differs in style from what Protagoras says in the rest of the dialogue (except at 334 A, where see note) as much as it differs from the myths of Plato. If Plato could insert in one of his works a speech by Lysias (Phaedrus 230 E foll.) I see no reason to suppose that he might not have made Protagoras deliver a speech of his own making.

[2] In the Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie V 2 p. 175 ff.

[3] Chiapelli ibid. III p. 15 and p. 256 foll.

[4] IX 55.

while others again saw in the far-distant past little but savagery and woe, out of which humanity has by slow degrees climbed upward[1]. Not a few—and this is perhaps the original view, whereof the others are fragments—maintained that the reigns of good and evil succeed each other in ever-recurrent cycles, as we find in the myth of the Politicus[2]. The fable of Protagoras represents mankind as having risen. It is in effect a novel version of the story of Prometheus superinduced upon a cosmological theory. So far as concerns the creation of man out of the four elements, and the assumption of a period of time during which there were no men upon the earth, we can find

[1] See Dümmler's Akademika p. 216 ff. (Die Anfänge des Menschengeschlechts). There is an excellent and learned collection of passages bearing on the Golden Age by Graf in Leipziger Studien VIII pp. 1—80, and another by Eichhoff in Fleckeisen's Jahrbücher Vol. 120 (1879) pp. 581—601.

[2] 269 C foll. When Eichhoff (l.c. p. 596) asserts that there is no hint of a golden age awaiting mankind in the future in Greek profane writings, he ignores the evidence of Hesiod. In the Works and Days 174—175 we read: *μηκέτ' ἔπειτ' ὤφελον ἐγὼ πέμπτοισι μετεῖναι ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλ' ἢ πρόσθε θανεῖν ἢ ἔπειτα γενέσθαι*, and ibid. 180—181 *Ζεὺς δ' ὀλέσει καὶ τοῦτο γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων, εὖτ' ἂν γεινόμενοι πολιοκρόταφοι τελέθωσιν*. It has been pointed out elsewhere (The Nuptial Number of Plato, p. 60) that the sign of the recommencement of the golden age is when children are born with grey hairs (cf. Polit. 273 E): an interesting parallel is afforded by the Testament cited by Mr James in his account of the Revelation of Peter p. 57, where it is stated that one of the signs of the end shall be "children whose appearance shall be as of those advanced in years: for they that are born shall be white-haired". There are traces of a similar tradition in Greek mythology: the three Graeae, for example, had grey hairs from their birth.

parallel views in Plato, and to a certain extent in Empedocles[1]; but there seems to be nothing in contemporary or previous literature to account for the peculiarities of the Prometheus legend as it meets us here. According to Hesiod[2], mankind originally possessed fire, but lost it through the impious cunning of Prometheus. When Prometheus steals it back again for the use of man, both he and humanity are severely punished, he by the eagle preying on his vitals, humanity by the creation of woman. In Aeschylus, Prometheus appears in like manner as the befriender of man against the gods, but we hear nothing of Pandora, nor does it appear that man had ever possessed the use of fire till Prometheus came and stole it. On the other hand, Aeschylus greatly amplifies the services of Prometheus to mankind, assigning to him the invention of astronomy, number, writing, medicine, and divination, as well as the elements of material happiness and comfort[3]. Although it is not expressly stated by Aeschylus that we owe the political or social art to Prometheus, the poet can hardly have intended expressly to exclude it from the list of his benefactions[4], since the arts which are attributed to Prometheus presuppose that man has already become in some measure a πολιτικὸν ζῷον. It was reserved for Protagoras to represent πολιτική as a later gift, not from Prometheus, but from Zeus himself, in direct and perhaps conscious antagonism to Hesiod, according to whom the age in which we are now living knows

[1] See the notes on 320 D foll.
[2] Theogony 521—616: Works and Days 47 ff.
[3] Prom. 445—506.
[4] Prom. 506 πᾶσαι τέχναι βροτοῖσιν ἐκ Προμηθέως.

neither Justice nor Shame[1]. But the great and fruitful innovation introduced into the legend by Protagoras, whether on his own responsibility, or in accordance with his authorities, consists in making Prometheus and Epimetheus assist the gods in the making of mortal things. The work of the gods ended when they had moulded man and the lower animals: it was Prometheus and his brother who were charged to furnish them with such accidentals as size, strength, hoofs, hair and hide, not to speak of food and procreative power. Protagoras' version of the legend, in which Prometheus already takes part in the creation of man, proved the germ of the later representation of the hero as the artificer of mankind out of clay. In this form the story was transmitted by the poets of the New Comedy to Rome[2], and appears in quaint and interesting reliefs upon Roman Sarcophagi[3].

§ 4. *On Socrates' criticism of Simonides' poem.*

The second episode which it is needful to discuss is the criticism given by Socrates of the poem of Simonides[4].

As we have endeavoured to shew, the aim of the Protagoras is to prove that virtue cannot be communicated by teaching, unless knowledge and virtue are

[1] Works and Days 192 δίκη δ' ἐν χερσὶ καὶ αἰδὼς οὐκ ἔσται.

[2] Philemon ap. Stob. Florileg. II 27 Προμηθεύς, ὃν λέγουσ ἡμᾶς πλάσαι καὶ τἄλλα πάντα ζῷα. Compare Menander in Lucian Am. 43 and Hor. Od. I 16. 13—16.

[3] See Baumeister's Denkmäler des klassischen Alterthums p. 1413.

[4] On the restoration of the poem see Appendix.

identical. Now Poetry, in the days of Plato, was regarded as perhaps the most powerful means of teaching virtue, and Protagoras had already maintained its educative value in his speech. It was therefore necessary to inquire whether the claims of the Muses were well founded. It became all the more necessary when the Sophists—or some of them—in this as in many other respects went with the stream, and developed the practice of poetical criticism into an art[1]. Socrates' exposition of the poem is intended to shew by a practical demonstration that poetry does not teach virtue because in poetry there is no knowledge. There cannot be knowledge in the written words of poets οὓς οὔτε ἀνερέσθαι οἷόν τ' ἐστὶν περὶ ὧν λέγουσιν, ἐπαγόμενοί τε αὐτοὺς οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις οἱ μὲν ταῦτά φασιν τὸν ποιητὴν νοεῖν, οἱ δ' ἕτερα, περὶ πράγματος διαλεγόμενοι ὃ ἀδυνατοῦσιν ἐξελέγξαι (347 E): for knowledge implies the power to ask and answer questions—its method is, in short, dialectic. Browning and other societies would have received short shrift from Socrates, unless the members communicated with the poet to find out what he meant: and even then the poet would himself require to be cross-examined—an ordeal from which he would not be likely to emerge successfully, being in fact but a Sophist himself[2]. Plato's objection to poetry in the Protagoras is not yet based upon ethical and metaphysical grounds as it was when he wrote the Republic, but rather reminds us of his condemnation in the Phaedrus[3] of written books in general as a means of

[1] See note on 338 E.
[2] See 316 D and note in loc.
[3] 275 D.

education. The poet is a θεῖος ἀνήρ, who says what he does not know: even when alive he cannot explain his meaning: how much less shall another when he is dead! Socrates might have been content to prove his point without doing so much violence to Simonides' meaning. His exposition of the poem is admittedly sophistical. To begin with, there is nothing in the poem itself to indicate that Simonides' primary intention was to overthrow the maxim of Pittacus, as Socrates avers[1]: Pittacus is censured for saying not what is untrue, but what is less than the whole truth. The real subject of the poem is the impossibility of continued perfection among mankind: the mention of Pittacus is but an episode, which might have been omitted without injuring the argument as a whole. But it is in the explanation of details that Socrates runs riot most. His comments upon μέν[2], upon ἀληθῶς[3], upon κακὸς δ' εἰ κακῶς[4], are obviously and intentionally absurd, while in dealing with εὖ πράξας[5] and ἑκών[6] he contrives by the most perverse sophistry to wrest the plain meaning of Simonides into his own favourite theories of the identity between knowledge and virtue and the impossibility of voluntary sin. But the exaggerated perversity of his exposition is doubtless intended as a satire on the epideictic displays in vogue among some of the Sophists: Plato would fain make it plain that he can beat a Sophist on his own ground.

[1] 342 A—343 C: 344 B et al. Schleiermacher's reference to the fragment of Simonides (in Schneidewin's Delectus fr. 2 of Simonides=Bergk[4] fr. 57) proves nothing for this particular poem.

[2] 343 D. [3] 343 D. [4] 345 A.
[5] 345 A. [6] 345 D.

At the outset, he borrows some features from the speech of Protagoras in 316 C: and the remark of Hippias, when the episode is ended, *εὖ μέν μοι δοκεῖς—περὶ τοῦ ᾄσματος διεληλυθέναι* may be taking as indicating that Hippias at least accepted the picture as a fair representation of his method[1]. We have not sufficient data to say for certain whether the picture is a caricature or not: probably it is just as much and as little of a caricature as the representation of the Sophists in the Euthydemus. At all events, if the sketch is even approximately true to nature, no one will deny that the Sophists had better have "put the poets on their shelves[2]" if they desired to reach the truth of things.

If the view which we have taken is correct, it will be vain to look for reasoned ethical teaching in the episode. The opinion of Dümmler[3], that Plato is here attacking Antisthenes for regarding virtue as *ἀναπόβλητος*[4], receives no support from the dialogue, even if we allowed that the truly virtuous man could ever have seemed to Plato or even to Socrates capable of losing his virtue.

[1] From this point of view, the whole episode should be compared with the speech of Socrates in the Phaedrus 237 B—241 D.

[2] 348 A, where Socrates virtually confesses that his exposition is naught.

[3] Akademika p. 50.

[4] Diog. Laert. VI 105.

§ 5. *On the identification of the Pleasant and the Good.*

The last episode which requires to be discussed in connexion with the argument of the dialogue is the identification by Socrates of the good and the pleasant. This identity is the hypothesis from which the final refutation of Protagoras is deduced: it is not a substantive result of the dialogue, but only a means to an end.

We remark at the outset, that Protagoras is at first unwilling to accept the identification: still more noteworthy is it that Socrates in reality offers no proof, beyond the εὖ ζῆν fallacy[1], which begs the question by equating εὖ with ἡδέως. The long discussion on the meaning of the common phrase 'to be overcome by pleasure' does indeed remove one obstacle in the way of the identification, but beyond this it does not go. Even here there are fallacies, as when Socrates infers that knowledge always determines the conduct of its possessor because it is her nature to rule[2], and in the subtle reasoning of 355 D[3], which, in point of fact, presupposes the theory that might is right. The only convincing proof, from the Socratic point of view, of the identity of the good and the pleasant, would be to demonstrate their essential unity by an analysis of the connotation of the two names: but of this there is no hint in the Protagoras. The meaning of 'Good' and of 'Pleasant' is supposed to be already known.

[1] 351 B.

[2] 352 B. The fallacy lies in a confusion of the ideal and the real: knowledge may be *ἰσχυρόν*, *ἡγεμονικόν* and *ἀρχικόν*, and yet not *ἰσχύειν*, *ἡγεμονεύειν*, or *ἄρχειν* in each individual case.

[3] See note in loc.

The teaching of the Protagoras on the relation between Pleasure and Good, as is well known, differs *toto caelo* from that of nearly every other dialogue of Plato. Not to mention the Philebus[1], and the Republic[2], where the point is rather that Pleasure is not *the* i.e. the *Chief* Good, in the Gorgias[3] and the Phaedo[4] we have the most explicit assertion of the distinction between the two notions. Contrast the following passages:

οὐκ ἄρα τὸ χαίρειν ἐστὶν εὖ πράττειν οὐδὲ τὸ ἀνιᾶσθαι κακῶς, ὥστε ἕτερον γίγνεται τὸ ἡδὺ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ (Gorg. 497 A).

οὐ ταὐτὰ γίγνεται, ὦ φίλε, τἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἡδέσιν οὐδὲ τὰ κακὰ τοῖς ἀνιαροῖς (Gorg. 497 D).

λέγεις δέ τινας, ἔφην, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὖ ζῆν, τοὺς δὲ κακῶς; Ἔφη. Ἆρ' οὖν δοκεῖ σοι ἄνθρωπος ἂν εὖ ζῆν, εἰ ἀνιώμενός τε καὶ ὀδυνώμενος ζῴη; Οὐκ ἔφη. Τί δ', εἰ ἡδέως βιοὺς τὸν βίον τελευτήσειεν, οὐκ εὖ ἄν σοι δοκεῖ οὕτως βεβιωκέναι; Ἔμοιγ', ἔφη. Τὸ μὲν ἄρα ἡδέως ζῆν ἀγαθόν, τὸ δ' ἀηδῶς κακόν (Prot. 351 B).

ὦ μακάριε Σιμμία, μὴ γὰρ οὐχ αὕτη ᾖ ἡ ὀρθὴ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀλλαγή, ἡδονὰς πρὸς ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας πρὸς λύπας καὶ φόβον πρὸς φόβον καταλλάττεσθαι καὶ μείζω πρὸς ἐλάττω ὥσπερ νομίσματα κτλ. (Phaedo 69 A).

ἐὰν μὲν γὰρ ἡδέα πρὸς ἡδέα ἰστῇς, τὰ μείζω ἀεὶ καὶ πλείω λημπτέα· ἐὰν δὲ λυπηρὰ πρὸς λυπηρά, τὰ ἐλάττω καὶ σμικρότερα· ἐὰν δὲ ἡδέα πρὸς λυπηρά, ἐὰν μὲν τὰ ἀνιαρὰ ὑπερβάλληται ὑπὸ τῶν ἡδέων, ἐάν τε τὰ ἐγγὺς ὑπὸ τῶν πόρρω ἐάν τε τὰ πόρρω ὑπὸ τῶν ἐγγύς, ταύτην τὴν πρᾶξιν πρακτέον ἐν ᾗ ἂν ταῦτ' ἐνῇ· ἐὰν δὲ τὰ ἡδέα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνιαρῶν, οὐ πρακτέα (Prot. 356 B).

[1] 53 C foll.

[2] VI 509 A οὐ γὰρ δήπου σύ γε ἡδονὴν αὐτὸ (i.e. τὸ ἀγαθὸν) λέγεις. Εὐφήμει· ἦν δ' ἐγώ.

[3] 495 A foll.

[4] 64 D, 68 E foll.