

The use of several species of *ad hominem* arguments in Plato's *Protagoras*

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Résumé. L'emploi de plusieurs arguments *ad hominem* dans *Protagore* de Platon. Plusieurs sortes d'arguments *ad hominem* dans *Protagore* de Platon sont identifiées et étudiées dans ce travail. L'idée principale de notre étude est que Socrate et Protagore emploient ces arguments pour gérer adroitement une situation rhétorique tendue qui est pleine d'exigences, et qui en plus est caractérisée par des tentatives de Socrate pour convaincre Protagore que celui-ci ne connaît pas « l'excellence » et par conséquent doit s'arrêter de l'enseigner. Protagore, comme réponse, rejette cet appel, et, par ce rejet, renforce l'autre argument de notre étude, à la suite de George Yoos, disant que, dans son ensemble, le dialogue *Protagore* est « une rhétorique d'appel et de réponse » composites dans laquelle « l'étalage de position social », « l'affirmation transcendante », la dissociation et *l'eristicos*, « la métaphore du maître », etc., sont librement utilisées dans des épisodes spécifiques par les interlocuteurs du débat. L'étude conclut que « les appels rhétoriques » de Socrate à Protagore ont échoué parce que Protagore n'est pas convaincu qu'il lui faut changer sa « façon d'être » de quarante ans en dépit des arguments *ad hominem*. Au lieu de cela, Protagore tourne le dialogue en monologue tandis que Socrate le salue et se retire.¹

Abstract. The use of several species of *ad hominem* arguments in Plato's *Protagoras*. The work identifies and analyses various species of arguments *ad hominem* in Plato's *Protagoras*. The leading idea of our study is that Socrates and Protagoras use these arguments in order to adequately handle a tense and demanding rhetorical situation. This situation, moreover, is characterised by Socrates' attempts to convince Protagoras of the fact that the latter does not know 'excellence', and therefore should stop teaching that subject. In answer, Protagoras rejects this challenge, and thus reinforces the other line of our present argument. Here, following George Yoos, we claim that the entire Protagoras dialogue amounts to 'a rhetoric of complex challenges and responses'.

¹ I thank Dr. F. A. Soyoye of the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, for translating the résumé into French. Dr Soyoye however is not responsible for such alterations as the editor made subsequently for considerations of space.

In this connection ‘the display of social position’, ‘transcendent affirmation’, dissociation and the *eristicos* (the ‘master metaphor’) are lavishly used by the interlocutors at various specific episodes of the debate. The study comes to the conclusion that Socrates’ ‘rhetorical challenges’ have misfired: Protagoras has not been convinced that he should change his ‘way of being’ of forty years’ standing, despite arguments *ad hominem* to that effect. Instead, Protagoras turns the dialogue into his own monologue, while Socrates greets him and leaves the scene.*)

Mots clefs: des arguments *ad hominem*, la situation rhétorique, l’appel rhétorique, exigence, mode d’existence, *arête*, savoir

Key words: *ad hominem* arguments, Rhetorical situation, Rhetorical appeal, Rhetorical Response, exigencies, ‘way of being’, *arête*, knowledge.

1. Introduction

The general perception that Plato’s *Protagoras* comes alive with a sense of the dramatic seems to have obscured the need to identify in specific terms its rhetorical features. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to develop the recognised view that the conduct of arguments in the dialogue is generally *ad hominem*.² These arguments deployed by Socrates and Protagoras against each other are either implicit³ or explicit.

There are further 6 sections of this paper excluding the Introduction. The rhetorical situation in which Protagoras finds himself is reconstructed from section 2 to 5, as a background to the succeeding arguments and episodes of the dialogue. This situation is characterised mainly by Protagoras’ self advertisement as a sophist, Socrates’ challenge to Prota-

*⁾ *Editorial remark:* the author carries no responsibility for this English translation of the abstract: it was made when it was found, in the last moment, that the author’s original, English abstract was not available.

² Guthrie, W.K.C. *A History of Greek Philosophy vol. iv Plato: The man and his Dialogues: Earlier Period*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 222.

³ Remland Martin has shown how nonverbal displays such as body movements of various kinds, can be used to denigrate one’s opponent in a debate thereby implicitly attacking his/her person. See ‘The Implicit Ad Hominem Fallacy: Nonverbal Displays in argumentative Discourse,’ *Journal of The American Forensic Association* (192) 79-80. I found this paper quite useful in shaping my thoughts in this essay.

goras regarding the content of his (Protagoras) curriculum, and the sophist's bid to manage the situation to his advantage. The other *ad hominem* fallacies arising from the conduct of arguments on topical issues of the dialogue, are identified through discussion in section 6 and its subsections. The conclusions to the paper appear in section 7, and one thing noteworthy is that in spite of all his *ad hominem* attacks on Protagoras, Socrates fails to convince the foremost sophist to reconsider his life long profession⁴ of teaching *excellence* to the young and ambitious youths in Greek Society of the 5th century B.C. enlightenment.

2. Setting the stage: Protagoras' professional profile

At the beginning of the dialogue, Plato highlights Protagoras' popularity and claim to fame. He declares himself a sophist openly unlike the other wise men of Greek history and legend, who were either afraid or ashamed to do so. Though he is a foreigner from Abdera in northern Thrace, he has taught and practised rhetoric for forty years without any harm to himself. This is in spite of the risks he runs always by luring away his host cities' young and promising men, who come to him for paid instructions, from their indigenous teachers. In addition, he is old enough to be a father⁵ to any person in the audience in Callias' house. Furthermore, Plato makes us appreciate the fact that Protagoras is one who is invincible in the display of his rhetorical prowess and other specialities.⁶

⁴ This is what modern rhetorical theorists call 'Way of being'. It connotes a person's (in the case of Protagoras) convictions or disposition prior to the influence of rhetorical communication on him/her. 'Self-rhetoric', that is, the evaluative process initiated by this communication in him/her induces reconsideration, of his/her conceptions of himself/herself which make him/her in a sense, wonder whether there are not better conceptions about oneself h/she could adopt in the light of the rhetorical communication s/he has received. See Arnold, C. 'Johnstone's 'Wedge' and Theory of Rhetoric', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 20, (2) 1987.

⁵ *Prot.* 317c.

⁶ DK80A1 shows that Protagoras was the first to exact a fee of a hundred Minas. He was the first to distinguish the tenses of the verb, to expound the importance of the 'right moment,' to conduct debates, and to introduce disputants to the tricks of

These credentials constitute a kind of status display⁷, for Protagoras presents himself to the audience as one who cherishes and basks in the glow of his fame as a sophist, a wise and accomplished teacher of *excellence*. The vivid description of the majestic movements of Protagoras in the opening scene of the dialogue shows that he not only believes in his status as a wise and famous man but he behaves so too.

However, contrary to Protagoras' conviction and that of most of his contemporaries that he has a good knowledge of his subjects and therefore can teach them competently, the reality that emerges as the dialogue unfolds, is that the great sophist for all his wisdom is an impostor, who cannot vindicate his pretensions to knowledge⁸. Thus, right from the beginning of the dialogue we are made to see Protagoras in danger of carrying an image or reputation, which he may not be able to defend in the ensuing debate.

Hence on a general level, the whole dialogue is a rhetorical appeal⁹

arguments. He was the first to introduce the Socratic type of argument, to introduce the method of attacking any thesis. All these and more of his rhetorical skills should indeed make Protagoras popular.

⁷ Remland Martins articulates the view that in debate context, or in a rhetorical situation such as described in the *Protagoras*, status display, that is (literally) throwing one's weight around, intimidates an opponent in an argument and as such is a kind of implicit *ad hominem* fallacy. Much of the autobiography, which Protagoras advertises in this part of the dialogue, falls into this category. See 'The Implicit *Ad Hominem* Fallacy,' 79 – 86.

⁸ It appears that ultimately, the rest of the sophists are implicated in this anticipated defeat or disgrace of Protagoras. This is, presumably, the whole purpose of involving Prodicus of Ceos in the analysis of Simonides' poem – to show that Prodicus' method of analysing language and its application to texts lacks substance but is rather prolix. Hippias of Elis is also made to expound his theory of cosmopolitanism by showing himself a supporter of *physis* in the *nomos- physis* antithesis debates, through which the essence of the noble ideal of cosmopolitanism cannot be determined contrary to what the sophist obviously thought. Cf. Grube, G.M.A. 'The structural unity of the Protagoras', *Classical Quarterly* 27, 1933, 203 – 207.

⁹ George Yoos uses the concepts of 'rhetorical appeal' and 'rhetorical response' to explain what most likely happens to the *psyche* of both rhetorician and his audience in a rhetorical situation. His definitions and use of these concepts support Charles Arthur Willard's position that argument is a process of intersubjectivity of arguers in a social interaction. For while 'rhetorical appeal... attempts to alter beliefs or commitments of

by Socrates to Protagoras himself, to the immediate audience in Callias' house, and by Plato to the readers of the dialogue. The major aim of this appeal is to make Protagoras and the identified audiences, but especially the immediate one, reconsider his credentials as a sophist. Protagoras and his audience respond to this rhetorical appeal through all sorts of interchange of opinions, ideas and arguments. This paper is concerned with identifying the features of the rhetorical appeal that Socrates makes in the dialogue and the responses of Protagoras and the rest of the audience.¹⁰

3. The 'wedging' operation on Hippocrates

The general feature of the dialogue as a rhetorical appeal and response is replicated in the individual episodes¹⁰. For instance, while Socrates and Hippocrates wait at the gate of Callias' house for the day to break clearly, Socrates questions the young man. The questions are asked in such a way as to test Hippocrates' convictions, his beliefs on earlier commitments¹¹ regarding what he hopes to gain from Protagoras, as his pupil. Much as these questions are not speeches, they are nevertheless posed to Hippocrates in a social interaction, that is, in a collaborative communication – a

audience ... seeks accommodation with others by seeking change within their commitments and acceptances', 'rhetorical responses' are explanations that address audiences as inquirers. They address the curiosity of audiences concerned about various matters'. See, 'Rhetoric of appeal and Rhetoric of Response' *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 20 (2) 1987, 107 – 117.

¹⁰ See also Charles Arthur Willard, "A Reformulation of the concept of Sociology of Arguments" *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 14 (Winter 1978) 121 – 140.

¹⁰ Plato's aporetic dialogues are mostly and essentially rhetorical appeals and responses.

¹¹ For Hippocrates, one may assume, these are that he believes himself to be an endowed noble Athenian citizen who aspires to public life in politics, and that he has the means to hire the services of esteemed Protagoras, reputed to have the skills to teach people *arête* which in this case is efficiency at managing both private and public life. His conceptions of himself are not what the rhetorical appeals are directed to change, but his commitments to the public image and opinion about Protagoras. See, Yoos, 'Rhetorical Appeal and Rhetoric of Response' p. 111.

discussion. So, the trend of the discussion between him and Socrates constitutes a rhetorical appeal and response. As Carroll Arnold would describe it, Socrates' questions as rhetorical appeal drive a wedge into Hippocrates' consciousness. This is held open by deliberation or self-rhetoric, and makes it possible for him to consider possible ways of being¹². In other words,

'it ...maintains consciousness that he is, but that he could be otherwise'¹³.

Socrates intends to dissuade Hippocrates from enrolling with Protagoras as a pupil, and in that way encourage him to search for an alternative way of life. Apparently, this is the purpose of Socrates' questions.

Those questions used as the wedging weapons in the operations do at the same time suggest to the lad new possible ways of being – he should rather aspire to nobler things than studying under a sophist. It is further suggested implicitly through the questions that the sophists are an infamous set from whom not much that is noble and of lasting value, is expected or can be learnt. Hippocrates should therefore reconsider his eagerness to be a pupil of Protagoras.

It may be surprising that as the dialogue unfolds, nothing is said again of Hippocrates whose request to be introduced to Protagoras initiated the whole debate in the first place. He neither asks questions nor makes any comment in the course of the debate. Hippocrates' silence can be explained by supposing that the 'wedging' questions directed at him

¹² As Arnold puts it in the paper referred to above, 'Self-rhetoric is what holds open the 'space' while 'temporal vistas' revealing 'haunting possibilities are contemplated' His view is that what 'George Yoos calls rhetoric that appeals...' acts, according to Henry Johnston, as 'a wedge between a percipient and an object of perception', creating what Molly Wethermer calls 'vistas'. Therefore, 'self-rhetoric... holds open the space while 'temporal vistas' revealing haunting possibilities are contemplated'. See 'Johnstones Wedge and Theory of Rhetoric', p. 125.

¹³ Given Hippocrates' awareness that Socrates is speaking to him or asking him questions in order to dissuade him from associating with the sophist – Protagoras – and the lad continued to be in 'collaborative communication' with Socrates, Hippocrates then risks his present 'way of being'. He is nudged to engage in a critical and moral assessment of his present 'way of being' – beliefs, convictions, aspirations with a view to maintaining, modifying or abandoning some or all of them altogether.

by Socrates achieved the expected results. It appears that by the time the debate began in earnest, the young man has changed his mind about his earlier request. He is obviously unable to find answers to the searching questions of Socrates during the 'wedging' 'experiment'. Consequently, at *Prot.* 313c, Hippocrates admits the case to be as Socrates says it is: He has now to ponder on the advantages and disadvantages of putting himself under the tutelage of a sophist. Apparently, Hippocrates has been saved from risking an association with the sophist. But he has at the same time listened 'to a potentially influential other'¹⁴ – Socrates who induced, through questions, 'a critical assessment of self and what is heard'¹⁵. He subsequently becomes a silent spectator at the debate between Socrates and Protagoras. Soon, Socrates attempts a similar wedging 'operation' on Protagoras who resists it, and in doing so, gets the dialogue under way.

4. Socrates' challenge to Protagoras

In response to Socrates' demand that Protagoras tells the audience the subject matter which he hopes to teach Hippocrates, Protagoras declares that unlike the other sophists who over-burden their pupils with learning of technical subjects¹⁶ such as mathematics and astronomy, his curriculum is designed to inculcate in his pupils, 'the proper care of his personal affairs, so that he may best manage his household, and also the state's affairs, so as to become a real power in the city...' (*Prot.* 318ff). This means that Protagoras' speciality is teaching virtue (*arête*), that is, *eubou- lia* or sound judgement.

Socrates challenges Protagoras on this occasion to show convincingly that *arête*, as he describes it, is teachable. And against the sophist's

¹⁴ See, Arnold, 'Johnstone's 'wedge' and Theory of Rhetoric' p. 125.

¹⁵ Arnold, p. 125.

¹⁶ Obviously, Protagoras was depreciating such practises and by looking at Hippias as he speaks, he uses glances as nonverbal displays to associate the man of Elis with this undesirable, in Protagoras' view, curriculum in the presence of the audience at Callias' house, cf. Remland, 'The Implicit Ad hominem Fallacy', 79-86.

claim, Socrates cites three counter examples:

1. That there are no identifiable teachers of *arête*.
2. That every citizen discusses political matters in the Athenian assembly even when he is not considered an expert in them.
3. Moreover, virtuous Athenian fathers seem not able to teach their sons those *aretai* for which these fathers were famous.

The case of Pericles and his sons who could not excel in politics and civil administration like him, is cited as an example (*Prot.* 319).

Thus, the onus is on Protagoras to defend his fame and reputation as the leader and wisest of the sophists. This, presumably, is Protagoras' own personal interest in the situation.¹⁷ However, this defense of Protagoras' professional integrity¹⁸ is to be done in the face of Socrates' public insistence that there is no viable problem for Protagoras to tackle. Socrates' challenge, which is an exigent in the rhetorical situation, forecloses it. However, Protagoras has to surmount this exigent, for it seems that there is no need for his profession given that *arête* that he claims to teach cannot be taught.

Socrates in consequence covertly suggests to Protagoras to rethink his life-long profession of teaching *arête*. This is the 'wedge' he drives through Protagoras' consciousness and personality¹⁹. Given that a public

¹⁷ In keeping with Alan Briton's elaboration of Lloyd Bitzer's notion of exigence in a rhetorical situation, Socrates' challenge as an exigent has both factual and interest components in that the sophist is challenged to prove himself before an assembly of fellow sophist – competitors, and their admirers, especially as the sophists used such an occasion as described in the dialogue, to recruit their clients and pupils. See Alan Briton, 'situations in the Theory of Rhetoric', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 14 (4) 1981, 234 – 248.

¹⁸ Protagoras' integrity here is not moral. Rather it is, as Scott Consigny articulates, the idea of rhetorical integrity, the ability of the rhetor, using rhetoric as an art, 'to disclose and manage indeterminate factors in novel situations without his action being determined'. See his 'Rhetoric and its situations', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 7 (3) 145 – 186.

¹⁹ The idea of 'wedging' expressed in this paragraph is still an application of the views of George Yoos and Carroll Arnold in their works already cited at various times

debate like one in the *Protagoras* is both an intellectual and psychological contest, and that success in it requires both deep insights and emotional stability, Protagoras has to resist Socrates' 'wedging operation' on his (Protagoras') *psyche*.

5. Protagoras tackles the recalcitrance²⁰ of the situation

Given Plato's picturesque description of the majestic movements of Protagoras in the courtyard of Callias' house, exhibiting the flamboyance of his personality just as Socrates and Hippocrates arrive, it is reasonable to suggest that Protagoras was poised for a public display – *epideixis* – and was not really expecting the sort of challenges Socrates sprung on him. He now has to defend himself and show to all and sundry that his life – long profession of teaching *arête* had not been a ruse after all. Socrates has just made the situation frosty. Protagoras has to defrost the situation, make it warm and lively by showing that there are lots of interesting problems to tackle in the face of Socrates' enervating scepticism designed to make him rethink the way he had been for upwards of forty years. In other words, in the situation he finds himself, he must, in order to maintain his integrity as a master of speech, 'transform the indeterminacies into a coherent structure'.²¹ He has to use all the resources at his disposal to meet the exigence of the situation.

He starts doing this by first of all securing the approval of the audience to respond to Socrates' challenge, as he, Protagoras, prefers. He chooses to respond through a myth. This choice does few things for Protagoras in the situation. It shows that he has a repertoire of rhetorical de-

above.

²⁰ This word captures the idea of aberrant of factors, incidents, in the rhetorical situation. Thus, Consigny sees it as 'those aspects and orders which the rhetor discloses through engagement', which 'may force (him) to alter (his) original strategy'. See, Consigny, 'Rhetoric and its situation', p. 178.

²¹ Consigny, p. 178.

vices from which he selects how to respond, depending on the situation. Because he can ‘work through... the pragmata of the situation’ with a view to making ‘issues emerge from it’²², he maintains his rhetorical integrity. This then conforms with what is already known about him – that ‘he was the first to conduct a debate’, and ‘to introduce the methods of attacking any thesis’ (DK80AI).

In maintaining his integrity by displaying his versatility in rhetorical art, he also displays his status²³ for he asks the audience: ‘But shall I, like an old man addressing his juniors recount to you an illustrative myth? Or shall I go through an expository discourse’?²⁴ It appears that Socrates and others in the audience refuse to be intimidated by this remark, just as Protagoras resisted the ‘wedging operation’ on him a short while ago. Otherwise, the dialogue would have turned out differently than it eventually did.

Secondly, the choice of response through a myth enables Protagoras exhibit the rhetorical technique of ‘the right moment’ – *kairos* (DK80AI). That the myth²⁵ genre is appropriate in the rhetorical situation described in Callias’ house is shown by the excitement caused by the

²² Consigny, p. 178.

²³ Remland discusses this kind of display and even calls it an implicit *ad hominem* fallacy. See his paper cited above.

²⁴ This is George Grote’s translation in *Plato and other companions of Socrates*, vol. II, 3rd ed., p. 38.

²⁵ Myths can be used by a speaker to quiet an audience and secure its attention because myths have entertainment value. When compared with the illustrative parallel, we see that myths suit addresses to large audiences because they are comparatively easier to invent (see, Aristotle, *Rhet.* ii.1394ff). In the present case, the utility of myths is underscored by the fact that they constitute a part of the shared or collective wisdom of a people’s culture, such as the Athenian culture of the fifth century B.C. enlightenment. As such, their assumptions enjoy widespread, acceptance and high level of intellectual respectability especially in a culture, like the Athenian culture of the epoch, under consideration, undergoing transition from orality to literacy (cf. R.J. Connors, ‘Greek Rhetoric and the Transition from Orality’, *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 19 (1) 1986, 38-65). Either myth or the illustrative parallel can be cited always as an authority to drive home a point even when the extrapolation from the moral of one incident to another may be dubious.

imminent clash of two giants of the Greek enlightenment – Socrates and Protagoras. This created a hilarious audience in the house of the son of Hipponicus.

Myths generally, and the Prometheus story²⁶ in particular, which Protagoras embellishes for his purpose on this occasion usually embody 'words high in imagery'.²⁷ They are almost 'concrete verbal utterances'.²⁸ Hence in terms of Dale Hample's discussion of 'Dual Coding theory', Protagoras' myth is to be coded verbally, and most likely, non-verbally in the minds of people in the audience. Going by this theory, concrete verbal utterances are usually coded in both verbal and non-verbal systems. In view of this, the myth facilitates Protagoras' identification with the majority in the audience who may likely say to themselves: He is one of us, for he shares the beliefs of our culture as shown in the imageries he deploys in his speech. So, he is really wise and ought to have the truth about the subjects of debate.²⁹

6. The appearance of more exigencies in the rhetorical situation and arguments of the dialogue

Thus far, Protagoras seems to be in charge of the situation. But as the dialogue shows, at a point in time, he exhibits some exasperation, and much later towards the end, he ceases to answer Socrates' questions altogether. Generally, the latter behaviour of Protagoras is explained in terms of his

²⁶ A similar story provides the plot for Aeschylus' drama: *Prometheus Bound*, and also appears in various forms in several stories of human progress from bestiality to civility found in Greek Literatures. See also, W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol. III, pp. 61-79.

²⁷ Dale Hample, 'Dual coding, Reasoning and Fallacies' *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 19 (Fall, 1982) 59 –77.

²⁸ Hample 'Dual Coding', 59 –77.

²⁹ According to Remland, endeavours by a rhetor to seek this kind of identification with the audience are implicit *ad hominem* fallacies. It is however mentioned here in connection with the deployment of the myth by Protagoras at this stage, to show his dexterity in managing the rhetorical situation.

inability to follow and participate meaningfully in the philosophical explanations of issues by Socrates. In my view, while this may be part of the explanation it certainly is not the whole of it. The other part has to do with how the debate between him and Socrates is conducted. Some of the instances are examined below.

6.1. *The metamorphosis of Protagoras' euboulia*

In his revealing paper, Joseph P. Maguire³⁰ shows that the meaning of *arête* which Protagoras claims he can teach Hippocrates on becoming his pupil, is not the same meaning with which his myth ends. What Protagoras claims to impart to Hippocrates is *arête* or *euboulia* defined as 'the ability to manage household and city efficiently'.³¹ However, by the time the myth ends, and as Maguire vividly shows³² there is 'an obvious shift... from (the conception of *arête* as *euboulia*) an amoral managerial skill at the beginning to the 'quiet' moral virtues...'³³.

In order to appreciate how this transformation occurs it is important that the 'movement'³⁴ of terms in that part of the dialogue be traced following Maguire's labours³⁵. We can recall that at the on set, and in or-

³⁰ 'Protatogras... or Plato? II: The *Protagoras*', *Phronesis* 22 (2) 1977, 103-122.

³¹ This view that what Protagoras claims to teach is *arête* conceived as managerial efficiency is supported by John Poulakos. He shows that the sophists taught or practised rhetoric as an art – *techne*. See, John Poulakos, 'Towards a sophistic Definition of Rhetoric', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16 (1) 1983, 38 – 65.

³² See, Maguire, 'Protagoras... or Plato?' p. 105.

³³ Maguire, p. 106.

³⁴ Socrates' remarks in the *Euthyphro* that he must be greater than his ancestor, Daedalus, 'for whereas, he (Daedalus) only made his own inventions to move, I move those of other people as well' (*Euthyphro*, 11). Though the remark is meant jocularly as a reply to Euthyphro's complaint that Socrates makes his definitions of piety unsteady, in the *Protagoras* we should take seriously Socrates' ability to make the meaning of Protagoras' *euboulia* 'move' through operative terms in the debate.

³⁵ See Maguire, 'Protagoras... or Plato? II: The *Protagoras*'. Most of the phrases in double quotation marks in this section of the paper are those of Maguire.

der to show how Hippocrates' association with him can improve the lad, Protagoras talks of inculcating in him *euboulia* – 'sound judgement' – regarding his own private affairs and those of the city-state. Shortly after this Protagorean declaration, Socrates quickly 'identifies *euboulia* with 'political expertise' (*techne*, 3226b), and the 'ability to make good citizens (*agathous politas*, 319a). As the dialogue shows, Protagoras agrees with this subtle identification.

In addition, 'political expertise' which now encapsulates *euboulia* is further equated with virtue (*arête*, 319e2, 320a3, 65,c1). However, in Protagoras' myth,³⁶ we encounter further a triple equation of terms: 'political wisdom' (*Sophia*, 312d5) is equated with 'political expertise' (*techne*, 32265), and then with 'political virtue' (*arête*, 322ef). Consequently, a sense that all these terms are equivalent is conveyed without any warning to the contrary.

Furthermore, 'political virtue/expertise' embracing the art of war (32265), establishment of cities in accordance with reverenace (*aidos*) and justice (*dike*) (322c2,4,7,d5), is distinguished from 'technological wisdom', (32id1,4), 'expertise' (32263,321elf), and 'Virtue' (322d7). Thereafter, we finally encounter the equation of 'political virtue / expertise' with 'justice and self control' (*dikaiousunes* and *sophrosunes*, (323a6,b2), which in turn is further equated with 'justice and the rest of political virtues' (325a1). This is eventually identified with 'man's virtue generally' (*andros arête*, 325a2).³⁷

Thus the conclusion is drawn from the preceding explanation that 'there has been an obvious shift with these series of equivalences from an amoral managerial skill at the beginning to the 'quiet' moral virtue and

³⁶ Plato makes us believe that Protagoras freely chose this myth himself, whereas this 'movement' of meaning of terms conveys the impression that it is one of those devices Plato/Socrates uses to disparage the sophists.

³⁷ This metamorphosis of *euboulia* yields the following Maguirean schema: Good judgement = political expertise = good citizenship = virtue = political wisdom = political virtue = Justice and self-control = Justice and the rest of political virtues = Justice, Self-control and pity. (See, Maguire, Protagoras... or Plato? II' p. 105).

the tranvaluation of virtue itself at the end'.³⁸

The point really is that in the *Protagoras*, there are 'three distinct levels of *arête*:

1. the managerial, moral, level at the beginning (Protagoras euboulia)
2. the conventional morality represented by any teacher, including Protagoras, who has no standard beyond the *doxai* of the community.
3. the intimations at the end of a moral level related to knowledge of an absolute standard'.³⁹

It is therefore obvious that by the time the debate really commences, Protagoras has been shifted from the first level through the second to the third level of meaning of virtues which require a standard in wisdom/knowledge for it to be beneficial to man. The debate on this by Socrates creates the favourable atmosphere for the deployment of further *ad hominem* techniques, dispositions and arguments by the two major interlocutors in the dialogue as shown subsequently.

6.2. *Argument on the identity of justice and piety (330c-332a)*

Perhaps, one way of identifying other *ad hominem* features of the interlocutors' strategies against each other, is to review Cobb's⁴⁰ powerful reconstruction of Socrates' argument especially in the section on the Identity of Justice and Piety laid out thus:

6.2a Justice is something (330c1)

6.2b this thing itself is just (330c5)

³⁸ Maguire, p. 122; see also *Prot.* 356b5.

³⁹ Maguire, p. 122.

⁴⁰ See, William Cobb, 'The Argument of the Protagoras' *Dialogue* 21 (1982), 713 – 731: Apart from the numbering which has been slightly modified to suit my purpose here, the layout of the argument is Cobb's.

- 6.2c Piety is something (330d2-4)
- 6.2d Piety itself is pious (330d8-e1)
- 6.2e the parts of virtue are such that the one of them is not of the other sort (330e5-6)
- 6.2f if piety is not of a just sort, it is unjust; and if justice is not of a pious sort it is impious (331a8-b1)
- 6.2g Justice is pious and piety is just (331b2-3)
- 6.2h Justness is the same as piety or it is most similar, and most of all justice is of the piety sort and piety of the justice sort (331b4-6).

Cobb considers this argument valid. The premises are admissions Socrates secures from Protagoras through *elenchos*⁴¹. However, prior to showing how valid it is, he makes the following noteworthy comment:

Socrates shows that the commonly held view expressed in 6.2a-2d leads to contradiction of 6.2e, which is 6.2h... Protagoras is unhappy about this. He reacts to 6.2h with a vague claim that it seems to him that there is some difference between justice and piety (331c2-3), but says that it does not matter, so they might as well call them the same if Socrates wants (331: 3-4). Socrates vehemently objects to this causal response to a contradiction among one's beliefs. Protagoras responds by saying that since everything is in some way or other similar to everything else he supposes justice and piety are similar, but he does not think they are the same (331c4-332a4).⁴²

Cobb himself recognises that given 6.2f above, the argument 'involves inferring from the fact that something lacks a certain property the claim that it possesses the contrary of that property'⁴³ This is invalid as a general principle for counter examples can easily be provided as he actually does.

⁴¹ '... an elentic demonstration is an *elenchos*, the conclusion of which is the contradictory of a proposition asserted by the interlocutor, and the premises of which are each obtained from the same interlocutor'. See Alan Code, 'Aristotle's investigation of the Basic Logical Principle: which Science Investigates the Principle of Non-contradiction?' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16 (3) (September 1986), 341 – 358.

⁴² Cobb 'The argument of the Protagoras', 713 – 731.

⁴³ Cobb, p. 718.

For instance ‘apples are not pious but neither are they impious’⁴⁴.

He also accepts that there is one plausible way in which Socrates’ argument at 330 can fail: The property in question may be inapplicable to the object, implying that deficiency of an object in a particular quality does not amount to the presence of the contrary in it. Moreover, there could be a neutral position between the contrary properties such that if an object does not possess one, it does not thereby mean it possesses the contrary.⁴⁵

In spite of this, Cobb contends that Socrates argument here is not fallacious, and inconsequence asserts, without evidence that

‘‘Socrates’ inference is not subject to either of these failures and hence not invalid’⁴⁶.

He secures the validity of Socrates’ argument with the claim that it

‘depends on the definition of ‘piety and of ‘justice’... it is plausible to take as operative some general definitions as the following derived from ordinary usage of the terms: ‘piety’: means doing what the gods approve⁴⁷ or ... acting divinely, that is, in accordance with those values which are of eternal significance’⁴⁸,

‘Justice’: means maintaining a proper order among things, that is in accordance with true value⁴⁹. On the basis of these ordinary definitions, he then concludes that ‘given such rather vague definitions, Socrates’ argument is valid’ for ‘in order to attack his premises, Protagoras would have to hold positions which outrage the average citizen...’⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Cobb, p. 718.

⁴⁵ Cobb, p. 718.

⁴⁶ Cobb, p. 718.

⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that in Plato’s *Euthyphro*, Socrates rejects this definition of piety as extrinsic. What he requires of Euthyphro is an intrinsic definition. So it is improper for Cobb to use it to make Socrates’ argument in the *Protagoras* valid.

⁴⁸ Cobb, ‘The Argument of the Protagoras’ p. 718.

⁴⁹ Cobb, p. 719.

⁵⁰ Cobb, p. 719.

This manner of making Socrates' reasoning valid is objectionable for the simple reason that Socrates 'demands a careful, rigorous, and critical assessment of traditional views and ... hold out *elenchos*, the rational examination of beliefs rather than their mere articulation, as the only hope of becoming better persons'⁵¹. Hence premises articulating traditional views, which Socrates rejects, cannot be used to legitimise his argument.

Guthrie's⁵² forthright assessment of the argument is preferable to Cobb's animated defence. Guthrie shows that Socrates uses an eristic method of argument against Protagoras: 'He (Socrates) does this (with 6.2e above) by the typically sophistic device of presenting an adversary with crude 'either – or' alternative... and by what is usually called a confusion of contradictories with contraries'⁵³.

In continuing the debate, Socrates in addition wants to foist on Protagoras the assumption that the above 'either – or' alternative (as 6.2f shows) is exhaustive,⁵⁴ for Socrates maintains that going by Protagoras' admissions here, 'piety will not be just nor justice pious, and so justice will be impious and piety unjust. But then, Protagoras protests and counters that, 'otherness does not exclude all similarity and that even contraries have something in common'⁵⁵.

Socrates apparently notices that this is a credible objection and thus abruptly and inconclusively cuts off that direction of argument rather than allow Protagoras a chance to examine the matter further. Without any further hint that a change in the debate is imminent, Socrates instantly introduces the argument on the 'identity of wisdom and self-control (332a-333b) as a transcending claim'⁵⁶ because it 'moves the focus of discussion

⁵¹ Cobb, p. 713.

⁵² Guthrie, W.K.C. *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol. IV p. 232.

⁵³ Guthrie, p. 222.

⁵⁴ Guthrie, p. 224.

⁵⁵ Guthrie, p. 226.

⁵⁶ According to Suzanne Mecorkle, 'a transcending claim is a superordinate claim

or argument from a specifically challenged statement to a different statement’.

These abrupt movements of Socrates with the subject matter of arguments can throw even an experienced user of *kairos* like Protagoras off balance, and as such, the abrupt changes in the arguments are implicitly *ad hominem*. Moreover, Guthrie also notes that earlier on in the debate, Socrates in questioning Protagoras ‘brushed aside the important lessons of Protagoras’ speech’⁵⁷, which then in my view facilitated the bridging of terms that resulted eventually in the metamorphosis of Protagoras’ *euboulia*. Protagoras, no doubt, notes all these meanderings of *Socrates* and fencing with arguments in the rhetorical situation.

6.2.1. Further *ad hominem* features of the debate on identity of justice and piety

Given the inherent weakness of 6.2e and 6.2h in the above argument regarding the ‘Identity of Justice and Piety’ Socrates’ reasoning therein is invalid. But an invalid argument is not necessarily *ad hominem*. There is, therefore, the need to give more details about the *ad hominem* character of the progression of argument thus far.

The issue between Socrates and Protagoras in the dialogue is: What is virtue? Is it of one or many essences? Socrates no doubt sets the theme of the argument squarely under the topic of ‘one-many’, ‘Unity – Plurality’ dissociation.⁵⁸ Thus he requests Protagoras

which alters the immediate point of contention... the transcending claim evokes a break in the progression of argument on a certain claim by moving the focus from a specifically challenged statement to a different statement’. See, ‘The Transcending claim as a strategy of Pseudo – Argument’, *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 17, (Summer 1980), 11-17.

⁵⁷ Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol. IV, p. 222.

⁵⁸ Dissociation is a strategy whereby an arguer attempts to break up an idea into two concepts: one which will be positively valued by the audience, and the other which will be negatively valued. This task is accomplished through the employment of philosophical pairs one of which is usually considered metaphysically, epistemologically or ethically superior to the other. In dissociation, the arguer seeks to persuade by arguing that of his chosen philosophical pair for instance, ‘Appearance/Reality’, his own chosen philosophical definition represents the real or

'... tell me *truly* whether virtue [*arête*] is *one* whole, of which justice and temperance and holiness *are part*; or whether all these are only the names of one and the same thing' (328).⁵⁹

Socrates does this apparently for two reasons: He uses the dissociation as a bait for Protagoras believing that he would choose the second term in the dissociation in accordance with the popular view of the nature, that is, *physis* of virtue (*arête*) which as a sophist, is a view Socrates believes he shares and expects him to affirm on this occasion. Hence the bait is an *ad hominem* strategy against Protagoras as a sophist. In using the dissociation, Socrates appears to have also assumed that with it, his *elenchos* can be a veritable tool for tripping up Protagoras in argument. This is especially so as he (Socrates) can, if he wants, use his *elenchos* to argue on either side of a subject/question, although this is regarded as a speciality of the sophists.

Incidentally, Protagoras in his response to this Socratic strategy quickly merges the dissociation into a contradiction. He maintains 'the qualities, that is, justice, temperance, holiness are the parts of virtue which is one' (328).⁶⁰ This move elicits Socrates hostile reaction as pointed out by Cobb. In that way therefore, Protagoras rejects the bait offered earlier by Socrates and deliberately builds into his response a rhetorical tension.⁶¹ Its purpose is to enable him show that he can 'attack any

true instance of what is being sought. That of his opponent is now cast in the bad light as illusory. See, Edward Schiappa, 'Dissociation in the arguments of Rhetorical Theory', *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 22 (Fall 1985), 73-81.

⁵⁹ Emphasis added, not in the original text.

⁶⁰ cf. The Eleatic (Zeno's) argument that a unit in a collection cannot have parts else it ceases to be a unit but a collection of units (see Fr. 1). With this and other similar arguments Zeno highlights the absurdity inherent in the pluralistic stand point of those deriding his master's (Parmenides) Monism and deductions from it about the nature of reality. That Protagoras on this occasion was imitating this type of argument is testified by the Fragment that says he was the inventor of *The Antilogue*. See Diogenes Laertius ix, 55.

⁶¹ William Cobb in the paper already referred to above, is therefore not correct when he says that Protagoras does not appreciate the tension in his answer at 328 in maintaining that one is many. Cobb himself does not consider the rhetorical import of Protagoras' answer.

thesis' (DK 80A1) and consequently, win the argument.

Socrates in turn sets out to redirect the trajectory of the argument along this line: virtue (*arête*) is one. Hence, his next question:

'Are they parts... in the same sense in which mouth, nose and eyes and ears, are parts of a face, or they are like parts of gold which differ from the whole and from one another in being larger or smaller' (328).

The suggestion here is that virtue is of one essence just as gold. Its parts can differ in size and dimension but never in essence.

Protagoras seems unimpressed by the said suggestions. His acceptance of it can make him lose the advantage of the rhetorical tension. Given the contradiction he created earlier on, he stands a chance of winning the debate by arguing (alternately) with equal cogency on either sides of the subject: 'virtue is one and many' (see DK 80a20). So, he merely restates his position: 'They are related to one another as parts of a face are related to the whole face' (329d). In support of this position, he denies Socrates' next suggestion that once a person has a part of virtue (*arête*) say piety, he in consequence possesses the rest. Rather he maintains that 'many a man is brave and not just or just and not wise' (349d). Armed with these suggestions, Protagoras sets the line of his own defence. He can go ahead to argue that virtue is of one essence and almost in the same breath that it is not, given that it has parts – an epideitic rhetorician's pattern of debate. These moves by the interlocutors are *ad hominem*. Protagoras attacks Socrates and dodges his questions as an expert in *maieutic* method, while Socrates attacks Protagoras as an epideitician or as a wrangler in argument. It is noteworthy, however, that each time, Socrates determines the topic under which the matter at hand is discussed.

The debate on identity of virtues further exhibits one notable feature. Socrates uses an analogy the import of which should not be lost on us. At 330 the face – virtue (*arête*) analogy in respect of their parts is very clear. Rhetorical theorists have identified two types of analogy or metaphor. These are the master and pupil's metaphors.⁶² The use of the former

⁶² The master's metaphor is used by a rhetor (master, and in the present case,

by a discussant shows his superiority in the conduct of argument. The analogy at 330 is a master's metaphor.

The significance of using it prior to the debate on the 'Identity of virtues' is that Socrates literally puts Protagoras in his 'requisite' place as a neophyte in argumentations who should be spoon-fed from the simplest of intellectual desserts in order not to strain his fledgling mind. This *ad hominem* master's metaphor deployed at this stage in the debate further enables Socrates to show dominance which in addition to his determining always the topic under which the issue is to be discussed, allows him to claim covertly a superior position to Protagoras in the debate.

6.3. The debate on the identity of wisdom and self-control (332a-333b)

Even while trying to argue for the identity of wisdom and self-control or temperance, Socrates is in a rush. He however tries to establish the preferred identity between wisdom and self-control using two basic arguments. The first one, which creates the appearance of a problem when there is none, plays with abstract nouns in the following way:

1. Foolish actions are done by folly and temperate actions by temperance.
2. That is done strongly which strength, and that which is weakly done by weakness do.
3. That which is done with swiftness is done swiftly, and that which is done with slowness, slowly.

Socrates) to explain to an audience (who lacks understanding, Protagoras in this case) something, which the rhetor understands. The master's metaphor then has no heuristic value to its creator (Socrates in this context). It simply represents the rhetor's effort to clarify meaning for someone.

On the other hand, the pupil's metaphor represents an attempt by the rhetor to express a hypothesis based upon what he feels he knows. It is a unique expression of meaning, which the creator himself cannot, at least at the moment comprehend in any other terms. The creator invents the metaphor in order to explain something to him as well as others. See, James R. Wilcox and H.L. Ewbank, 'Analogy for Rhetors' *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 12 (1) (Winter, 1979), 1-20.

4. That which is done in the same manner is done by the same, and that which is done in an opposite manner by the opposite. (332)⁶³

The objection to this kind of argument is that premises (1-3) and the conclusion (4), are all contrary to experience. For instance there could be a temperate action that is clearly foolish: A father who gives money repeatedly to his incorrigible gambler-son might have temperately created domestic peace in his family, but at the same time foolishly continued to encourage his son to perdition. Secondly, there are strong things created by weak actions or processes. Rocks are formed by either weak molten magma or the weak process of sedimentation; the act of war is a strong physical manifestation of inert deliberations and decisions of political/military leaders. Further counter empirical examples can be cited for the other premises.

In this regard, Guthrie remarks,

‘we do not normally ask for agreement to statements that it is by self-control that the self-controlled are self-controlled, that to be performed weakly an act must be performed with weakness, and that in general acts done in the same manner are done by the corresponding agency’.⁶⁴

Socrates second ‘argument’ in this section hinges on three incoherent statements:

1. Everything has one opposite or contrary
2. Wisdom and temperance as parts of virtue are dissimilar both in themselves and their functions
3. Folly has two opposites: wisdom and temperance (333).

These three propositions are admissions of Protagoras, which do not cohere with one another. The only way to remove the incoherence between them is that in keeping with (1), it has to be said that in (3), Socrates sug-

⁶³ This is Benjamin Jowett’s translation in his *Plato, no. 7*, in the series: *Great Books of the Western World* Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc, 31st printing, 1989, p. 226.

⁶⁴ See Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol. iv, p. 226.

gested, wisdom is the same as temperance.

It has been pointed out that no. 1 above is a dogma which is vitiated by the realization that

'non-X need not be contrary to X but may either be at an intermediate point on the same scale or belong to an entirely different category'⁶⁵.

It is noteworthy that Protagoras reluctantly agrees to no. 3 in the argument at 332, and we notice that he does not bother to raise an objection, possibly because he knows that Socrates in the argument engages in solecism, and being himself the master of solecism as DK80A28 testifies, Protagoras may have chuckled and reluctantly allowed Socrates have his way instead of chasing shadows. In the case of the argument at 333, Socrates does not allow Protagoras any chance to examine it. Rather, with this abrupt comment: 'Protagoras... we must finish the inquiry and not faint', he initiated a new argument for the identity of justice and self-control (333b), which also acts here as a transcending claim essentially.

In view of the abrupt endings of the two preceding debates on the 'identity of justice and piety' (330c-332a) and on the 'identity of wisdom and temperance or self-control' (332a-333b), it is reasonable to suggest that Protagoras notices that on one occasion when the tide of the argument may have favoured him (330c-332a) in view of his credible objections, it is cut off by Socrates. On the other occasion (332a-333b), he is not even allowed a breathing space to examine the argument. So, he is gradually convinced that in this rhetorical situation Socrates exhibits dominance, which is an index of power in a rhetorical situation. It is thus another way of telling one's adversary, 'I am not intellectually at par with you as I can do with the argument what I prefer'⁶⁶ This sort of disposition

⁶⁵ Guthrie, p. 226.

⁶⁶ In a private discussion, Professor J.T. Bedu- Addo informed me that the Greeks regarded Socrates and Protagoras to be intellectually at par with each other, even though Socrates nowadays is regarded as superior intellectually to Protagoras. This is, apparently, a modern sentiment which does not tally with this expressed confusion regarding the inventor of Socratic *elenchos*: 'In spite of much discussion, there is no certain answer to the question whether Socrates developed the *elenchos* from methods already used by the sophists like Euthydemus, or even Protagoras, who influenced the

is regarded in rhetorical theory, according to Remland, as an implicit *ad hominem* fallacy.

6.4. *Protagoras' treatise on the relativity of goods and his quest for respite (Prot. 334)*

In pursuance of Socrates' identification of Justice and temperance, he endeavours to make Protagoras admit that the absolutely inexpedient is good: 'when you say, Protagoras, that things inexpedient are good, do you mean inexpedient for man only, or inexpedient altogether? And do you call the latter good?'⁶⁷ The sophist rejects this view that the absolutely inexpedient could by any means be called good, and instead delivered a treatise on the relativity of goods (*Prot.* 334ff). Thereafter, one of the exigencies of the rhetorical situation of the dialogue appears: Socrates threatens to leave because, according to him, he has a short memory and cannot follow Protagoras' long speech. He demands that Protagoras, who boasts of expertise in both long and short speeches, should rather adopt the latter for this occasion.

Few things can be said about this exigent in the context of the rhetorical situation under discussion. First, going by Socrates' remark at 333 that 'I thought that Protagoras was getting ruffled and excited, he seemed to be setting himself in an attitude of war'⁶⁸, it seems that Protagoras as an experienced debater, consciously creates the noted exigent in order to give himself respite in the tense rhetorical situation. In this regard, the exigent widens the circle of debate by bringing in other sophists into the fray, in an attempt to resolve the exigent and thereby control any further recalcitrance of the situation. This attempt, by all and sundry, at controlling the recalcitrance naturally gives Protagoras some respite in the intense debate context of the *Protagoras*.

development of sophists' argumentative methods'. See, H.D. Rankin, *Sophists, Socratic and Cynics*, New Jersey, Barnes and Nobles books, 1983, p. 22.

⁶⁷ *Prot.* 334; Jowett's translation in *Plato*, p. 50.

⁶⁸ Jowett, p. 50.

Secondly, Protagoras as a master of the opportune moment – *kairos* – sees the exigent as such, and consequently uses the episode to draw attention to Socrates' unfair debate rules. These require Protagoras to use only the question and answer method. He therefore reminds Socrates

‘... many battle of words have I fought, if I had followed the method of disputation which my adversaries desired, as you want me to, I should have been no better than another, and the name of Protagoras would have been no where’⁶⁹.

In analysing Simonides' poem (339-347) Socrates makes a long speech after the manner of the sophists. He thus out rightly violates his own rules against making long speeches, and nobody in the audience calls him to order. This confirms his dominance in the situation.

In addition, ‘the reconciliation offered by Socrates [in analysing Simonides' poem] is a caricature of the method of interpretation given by the sophists’.⁷⁰ So, by the time the debate resumes on the claim that ‘courage is knowledge’ (349d-3516), Protagoras has been sufficiently disenchanted with a host of implicit, and sometimes explicit *ad hominem* fallacies.

6.5. *The debate on the identity of courage and knowledge (349d – 351b)*

The test of wits proceeds as Protagoras realises that he has been made to admit the statement that ‘all the confident are courageous’, whereas his earlier admission commits him to maintaining only that ‘all the courageous are confident’. In view of this he proceeds to offer a *reductio ad absurdum*⁷¹ of Socrates' earlier argument to show that ‘courage is knowledge’⁷². Socrates secures this identity by pointing out that ‘confidence

⁶⁹ *Prot.* 335.

⁷⁰ Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, p. 124.

⁷¹ Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* vol. iv: The Dialogues p. 230.

⁷² Guthrie, p. 230. cf. Socrates' example to Meno in the dialogue of same title, that ‘circularity is a figure but not figure:’, showing him that circularity stands to figure as

and courage are not coterminous but confidence is a genus of which courage is only one of two species'⁷³. The validity of this argument depends on the assumption that 'All powerful men are strong', which is a conversion of a universal affirmative proposition. According to Guthrie, this Protagoras' *reductio* is 'a travesty of Socrates' argument because it leaves out an essential step taken in 350b1-c2: 'But the ignorant may also be bold, therefore some bold men are not brave'⁷⁴. It is therefore interesting that

'Protagoras leaves this out and charges the omission to Socrates as a weakness. It is he (Protagoras) who has introduced the fallacy of converting a universal affirmative proposition, and then foisted it on Socrates'⁷⁵.

This move by Protagoras is *ad hominem*. It is similar to Socrates' attempt to foist the 'either ... or' alternative absolutely on Protagoras during the debate on the 'identity of justice and piety (329c- 332a).

6.6. *The debate on pleasure and goodness (351-358d)*

Between 351b and 358d, hedonistic thesis and the hedonistic calculus are debated. Protagoras' view on the question of hedonism and goodness is however located at 351b3-c7. Donald Zeyl has reconstructed the argument of that segment of the dialogue, which can now be helpful in this discussion⁷⁶. In the argument under reference, Protagoras is known to have maintained a number of propositions on the subject of hedonism and goodness as follow:

1. Some men live well, others badly.
2. A man lives badly if he lives in distress and suffering

species to genus See *Meno* 74ff.

⁷³ Guthrie, p. 230.

⁷⁴ Guthrie, p. 230.

⁷⁵ Guthrie, p. 230.

⁷⁶ Donald J. Zeyl, 'Socrates and hedonism: *Protagoras* 315b – 358d', *Phronesis* 25 (3) 1980, 250 – 269.

3. A man lives well if he lives pleasantly to the end.

From (2) and (3) Socrates deduces (4) thus: 'Living pleasantly is good and living unpleasantly is bad'. But Protagoras assents to this only as modified in (5) as: 'Living pleasantly is good if one lives in the enjoyment of praiseworthy things'. Now, Socrates links (5) to (6) thus: 'Some pleasant things are bad, some painful things are good' - a standpoint he attributes to the common people.

Zeyl's two comments on the direction of the argument above is important for us to highlight the *ad hominem* strategy of Socrates here. Zeyl maintains first, that

'Protagoras shrunk from accepting hedonism out-right by proposing (5), and thus would not stand by the implication of his earlier answers. So, now, Socrates has reason to object to Protagoras' proposal of (5) and the non-hedonistic view of the relations of pleasant and good which it entails as stated in (6), not because he thinks that (5) and (6) are false, but because they are inconsistent with the sophist's earlier answer'⁷⁷.

Secondly, Zeyl's position then is that 'Protagoras is vacillating between two views about that relation, a hedonistic one to which his actual evaluation commits him, and a non-hedonistic one which alone his scruples allow him to accept explicitly'⁷⁸ Thus, in view of Protagoras' noted inconsistency and vacillation, Socrates uses (7): 'Pleasant things are good in respect in which/to the extent to which they are pleasant; painful things are bad in respect in which/to the extent to which they are painful'⁷⁹, in 'pressing his interlocutor (Protagoras) to be consistent'⁸⁰.

The point should be made clearly and emphatically that anyone pressing a sophist especially, Protagoras and Gorgias to be consistent is arguing *ad hominem*, for in view of their rhetorical principles⁸¹, and as

⁷⁷ Zeyl, pp. 253 – 254.

⁷⁸ Zeyl, p. 254.

⁷⁹ Zeyl, p. 251.

⁸⁰ Zeyl, p. 251.

⁸¹ See my paper 'Protagoras' Homo Mensura Dictum, and the Possibility of Rhetoric',

sophists basically, inconsistency is an essential tool or disposition in their profession and practise of rhetoric. The point is made once and for all, in their favour, when it is said of Gorgias that he

‘was never at loss for words, for if he speaks of Achilles he praises Peleus, then Aeacus, then the god, and similarly in the case of manliness, which does this or that or is of a certain sort’ (DK82B).

Similarly, Gorgias maintained as a rhetorical tool, that ‘the opposition’s seriousness is to be demolished by laughter, and laughter by seriousness’ (DK82B12). Inconsistency is also the essence of Protagoras double arguments, which many of the sophists adopted as a rhetorical device.

Moreover, from 353, Socrates and Protagoras ostensibly examine, at the instance of the former, the opinion of the many regarding the relationship between pleasure and pain.

Now, in view of the noted disparaging remarks of Alcibiades – son of treachery and partisanship – at 348 which Socrates accepts made Protagoras ashamed, this section on hedonism and goodness and the way the argument there – in is conducted, is also *ad hominem*. Protagoras is invited to participate in examining the popular opinion on the question of pleasure and pain, only to be ridiculed in the process. He is surreptitiously taken as one of the many, even though he seems not to realise it.

The absurd conclusion drawn from this discussion such as ‘a man should do what he knows to be evil when he ought not, because he is even overcome by good...’ and other statements like this one in that context, are really logical jabs at Protagoras in the guise of examining popular opinion. The centrepiece of the *ad hominem* argument here is that Protagoras like the ignorant many talks of hedonistic calculation without realising that such a calculation requires a standard of measurement and knowledge of it. Protagoras like the ignorant populace is not even bothered to acquire such a standard and knowledge.

7. Conclusions

The tripartite audience of the *Protagoras*, as observed at the beginning of this paper, include Protagoras himself as Socrates' interlocutor, the assembly in Callias' house, and we the modern readers of the dialogue. In terms of its features, the dialogue is basically a rhetorical appeal and response in which *ad hominem* strategies and arguments are generously deployed.

The appeal is directed, in the first instance, to Protagoras urging him to reconsider the basis of his claim to wisdom and fame. He sees this as a genuine challenge and as a consequence, initiates a rhetorical response to meet it. This response is seen especially in his myth and speech on the relativity of goods, believing up till the discussion on the hedonistic calculus (351b – 353d) and slightly beyond it, that the argument has been earnestly pursued. However, it gradually becomes clear to him that the conduct of the arguments in the dialogue has all the while been *ad hominem* in various ways.

In the first instance, there is the subtle 'wedging operation' by Socrates on Protagoras' *psyche* and personality. In addition, the salient aspects of his myth are brushed aside, and as a consequence, his idea of virtue (*arête*) as *euboulia* is forced, through unfair bridging techniques to assume a moral connotation. Based on this, the debates on 'identity of virtue' is foisted on him, and even when he assents to debate it, the *topics* are surreptitiously changed from dissociation where his double – arguments and other rhetorical techniques should be effective, to that of 'Identity' under which Socratic *elenchos* is quite efficacious.

Second, Socrates has used the eristic method to prod him (Protagoras) to accept that the 'either-or' alternative encountered in the debate on the 'Identity of justice and Piety' (330c-332a), is exhaustive. Socrates' use of transcending claim against Protagoras is also *ad hominem*, for without notice, he changes abruptly from the debate on 'identity of Justice and Piety' (330c – 332a) to that on 'identity of Wisdom and Self-control' (332a – 333b).

Third, Socrates' deployment of the explanatory 'Virtue: face' mas-

ter's analogy portrays Protagoras as a neophyte in argumentation, and thus demeans his intellectual ability. Moreover, Socrates' use of Solecism during the argument on the 'identity of wisdom and self control' is meant to divert Protagoras to a red herring of debating whether 'act done in the some manner are done by the corresponding agency'⁸². However, Protagoras, himself a master of solecism, notices the trap and neglects it.

Protagoras as an experienced discussant and a master of 'the opportune moment' tries a few *ad hominem* strategies against Socrates. His status display in choosing to address the audience as juniors through a myth is one example. Another is his merging of the dissociative topic of 'one – many' into a contradiction during the debate on the 'Identity of Justice and Piety'.

In addition, Protagoras presses Socrates sore point by delivering a long speech on the relativity of goods, thereby instigating recalcitrance in the rhetorical situation characterised by Socrates' unfair debate rules. This recalcitrance gives the sophist some respite. It widens the circle of discussion by bringing into it other members of the audience who endeavor to control the said recalcitrance by prevailing on Socrates not to abandon the discussion.

Furthermore, Protagoras foists on Socrates the fallacy of converting a universal affirmative proposition at the debate on the 'Identity of Courage and Knowledge'. Finally, Protagoras' suspension of cooperation towards the end of the dialogue when he convinces himself, that the sophists as a class, are the objects of ridicule in the dialogue⁸³, is one way of managing an unfavourable rhetorical situation. In that way, he turns a debate into a monologue thereby allowing an over-zealous opponent to run himself out.

It can be said that given the foregoing, Socrates' rhetorical appeal to Protagoras does not succeed as it did in the case of Hippocrates who appears to have reconsidered his aims and intentions – his 'ways of be-

⁸² Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol. IV. p. 226.

⁸³ In making this point it is supposed that Protagoras as an experienced and intelligent arguer engages himself in Carroll Arnold's 'self-rhetoric'.

ing'. Nevertheless, Socrates' appeals 'opened' Protagoras' consciousness, and this wedge is maintained by debate in the rhetorical situation much as 'self-rhetoric' would have done in the absence of an objective rhetorical situation.

However, Protagoras' possible realization that the whole debate is a pun on him and his colleagues makes him decline a reconsideration of his 'way of being', contrary to Socrates' expectation. For Protagoras, it has been a credible and worthwhile existence which is evident in his achievements and life-style. Apparently, no further argument is necessary, in his view at this stage, to prove it. So he keeps quiet as a way of indicating that Socrates' rhetorical appeal to him failed to achieve its aim. This possibly explains the complements the interlocutors pay to each other at the end of the debate.

