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MOVING OUTSIDE THE CAVE: USING PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS* AS A MODEL FOR CULTIVATING CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

Abstract

Academic philosophers frequently use Plato's portrait of Socrates in the Apology *as a model for our own pedagogical endeavors. Like Socrates, we see philosophy as the practice that aims toward wholeness, a practice that heals the wounds of embodied existence. We primarily do this work within the boundaries of our classrooms. As a result, we often focus on the private dimensions of our work, our academic publishing, our preparations for classroom lectures and discussions, as the main ground in which we hope our philosophical seeds will take root. We overlook the importance of planting philosophical seeds in the community gardens of the world, at least the world outside of the classroom.*

I see two main problems with philosophers keeping their philosophical work inside the ivory towers: 1. People outside of academic circles often do not see the value of what we do in the classroom. As a result, the importance of education as an intrinsic good is consistently devalued in our society. 2. The public sphere is shockingly devoid of meaningful philosophical exchange about ideas. As a result, there is an increasing distrust of the public sphere as a civil space where citizens engage each other. In this paper, I turn to Plato's Protagoras *to find resources to help teachers (and students) navigate the complex terrain of contemporary academia and its place in cultivating an informed citizenry.*

"Care for the self is thus, indissolubly, care for the city and care for others."[1]

Academic philosophers frequently use Plato's portrait of Socrates in the *Apology* as a model for our own pedagogical endeavors[2]. Like Socrates, we value self-inquiry. We believe the "unexamined life is not worth living."[3] We practice Socrates' maieutic art,

[1] P. HADOT, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, Belknap Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 38.

[2] Though I am focusing on a text and canonical figure of the philosophical tradition, I see Socrates and his pedagogical endeavors throughout the dialogues as a symbol of the liberal arts educator regardless of the particular disciplinary specialization. Thinkers like Plato and Socrates lived and worked before there were strong distinctions between the disciplines as we know them. In this way, they can serve as powerful models for interdisciplinary educators in their endeavors to reach a broader student base. Their legacy to us is a call to live and work beyond the bounds of our disciplinary perspectives.

[3] *Apology* 38a.

helping others bring forth their ideas[4]. We encourage our students to think beyond the received views of their contemporary culture, just as Socrates hoped to lead Charmides to a deeper understanding of temperance. We hope to lead others to see the philosophical limitations of cultural icons, to see the shadows on our own cave walls for what they are: manipulated images of a distorted sense of reality[5]. Like Socrates, we see philosophy as the practice that aims toward wholeness, a practice that heals the wounds of embodied existence[6].

Most of us tacitly agree with John Henry Newman's view of Liberal Education as an end in itself. In his famous set of lectures *The Idea of a University,* Newman boldly claims that "Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence." As a means of reflecting on his claim that "Everything has its own perfection," he asks the reader to consider

> "Why do you take such pains with your garden or your park? You see to your walks and turf and shrubberies; to your trees and drives; not as if you meant to make an orchard of the one, or corn or pasture land of the other, but because there is special beauty in all that is goodly in wood, water, plain and slope, brought all together by art into one shape, and grouped into one whole."

Newman's point is clear. Just as we seek beauty in the world around us, we seek to cultivate the beauty of the mind itself. In doing so, we take Voltaire's advice to "cultivate our garden" to heart[7]. We see our pedagogical endeavors as an ongoing opportunity to engage in the intellectual practices that enrich our daily lives. We primarily do this work within the boundaries of our classrooms, doing our philosophical work as part of providing a liberal arts education to the young, and an education that often means much more to us than it does to them. As a result, we often focus on the private dimensions of our work, our academic publishing, our preparations for classroom lectures and discussions, as the main ground in which we hope our philosophical seeds will take root. We overlook the importance of planting philosophical seeds in the community gardens of the world, at least the world outside of the classroom.

I see two main problems with philosophers keeping their philosophical work inside the ivory towers: 1. People outside of academic circles often do not see the value of what we do in the classroom. As a result, the importance of education as an intrinsic good is consistently devalued in our society. 2. The public sphere is shockingly devoid of meaningful philosophical exchange about ideas. As a result, there is an increasing distrust of the public sphere as a civil space where citizens engage each other.

In this paper, I turn to Plato's *Protagoras* to find resources to help teachers (and students) navigate the complex terrain of contemporary academia and its place in cultivating an informed citizenry. The *Protagoras* is often overshadowed by the hegemony

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[4] See *Theaetetus* 149a-152a where Socrates compares his philosophical practice to the art of midwifery.
[5] See *Republic* 514a-516d.
[6] In the *Phaedo*, Socrates describes philosophy as a preparation for death and dying (64a). Aristophanes describes eros, the essence of philosophy as a search for our missing half *Symposium* 192e.
[7] This is the last line of Voltaire's *Candide.* http://www.literature.org/authors/voltaire/candide/chapter-30.html (accessed 11/5/2012).

of the *Republic* and the *Apology* in interdisciplinary humanities programs and even in traditional introductions to philosophy and surveys of ancient philosophy; it does not get the classroom attention it deserves. This omission is unfortunate because the dialogue engages a number of important themes that are helpful to consider in the overall context of contemporary higher education: the value of education in and of itself, what students hope to do with the education they receive, and the role of education in the cultivation of good citizenship. The *Protagoras* offers a challenging call for philosophers and other liberal arts educators to take on a more prominent role in the public sphere because it shows an integral link between the domain of what we now call "the classroom" and the domain of the citizen.

I focus on three parts of the *Protagoras* to draw out the contemporary lessons we can learn from Socrates' encounters in the dialogue. These passages are 1) the opening exchange between Socrates and the unnamed auditor of the dialogue, (309a-310a), 2) the Socrates-Hippocrates exchange, (310b-314c) and 3) Socrates' exchange with Protagoras and the other guests at Callias' house immediately following Protagoras' Great Speech (328c-338b). Plato's *Protagoras* offers us the model of philosopher as a publically engaged intellectual. Socrates' actions in the *Protagoras* call us to go down into the cave to bring others into the light of the Good.

Let me briefly describe the *Protagoras* itself. In this dialogue, Socrates narrates an encounter he has with three famous sophists, Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus at the home of a prominent Athenian, Callias[8]. Socrates comes to Callias' house at the urging of his young friend, Hippocrates. At Callias' house, Socrates engages Protagoras in lengthy debate about political virtue. Socrates narrates the conversation almost immediately after it happens to an unnamed friend. The dialogue takes place around 430 BCE when Athens is at the height of its political power. Two recent books on Plato's portrait of Socrates argue that the *Protagoras* illustrates the moment where Socrates becomes famous in Athens. In *How Philosophy Became Socratic*, Laurence Lampert argues, "Plato shows Socrates mounting the stage-and taking center stage and meaning to dominate it."[9] In *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues*, Catherine Zuckert argues along similar lines. Zuckert suggests that Socrates told narratives about his philosophical endeavors in order to manage his reputation within the Athenian social sphere. She remarks, "After he became famous, Socrates apparently realized that this conventional misrepresentation of the character of his association with the young was

[8] "In the course of the fifth century BCE the term, while retaining its original unspecific sense, came in addition to be applied specifically to a new type of intellectuals, professional educators who toured the Greek world offering instruction in a wide range of subjects, with particular emphasis on skill in public speaking and the successful conduct of life." See C.C.W. TAYLOR and MI-KYOUNG LEE, "The Sophists", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/sophists/ (accessed 11/5/2012).

[9] L. LAMPERT, *How Philosophy Became Socratic*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2011, p. 130. Lampert continues, "Socrates takes steps to create a new public image for himself and thereby for philosophy as he has come to understand it. He speaks in public like a new kind of Spartan wise man, taking on the burden of fame in order to show his Athenian country men that philosophy is salutary and public-spirited" (p. 130).

dysfunctional, if not dangerous."[10] Though the ultimate aims of these two scholars is a bit different, they share the view that the *Protagoras* focuses on the pivotal moment in the history of Socrates and the history of Athens where Socrates became a public intellectual. In addition to showing the great debate between Socrates and Protagoras, where Socrates gets the better of the much more famous Protagoras, the dialogue also illustrates the first instance where Socrates manages his public reputation. Immediately after the meeting with Protagoras, Socrates narrates the account of his encounter with Protagoras to this unnamed friend. It is to this exchange that I now turn.

1. *The Philosopher Amongst Acquaintances: The Socrates-Auditor Exchange*

The *Protagoras* starts with an exchange between Socrates and his auditor (309a–310a). The dialogue begins as this unnamed auditor asks Socrates: "Where have you just come from?" (309a)[11]. We do not know exactly who the auditor is despite learning more about the auditor's character than we do in dialogues like the *Lysis*, the *Charmides,* and the *Republic*. Though Robert Bartlett correctly observes that the auditor is referred to as a *hetairos* (a companion), rather than the more intimate *philos* (friend), the auditor and Socrates seem to know each other fairly well[12]. For example, he observes some aspect of Socrates' demeanor that enables him to answer his own opening query about Socrates' activity. He remarks: "Or is it indeed clear that you have been hunting Alcibiades who is in his prime?" (309a). Socrates acknowledges that his assumption is correct (309b). Second, the joking manner in which they converse about the appropriate age for a beloved and about Socrates' interest in Alcibiades suggests at least a passing familiarity between them, if not a more intimate relationship. Third, Socrates wants to tell the auditor about "something strange" that happened to him (309b). Just as the auditor knows Socrates well enough to surmise that he had been with Alcibiades, Socrates knows the auditor well enough to recognize that a story about Protagoras will eclipse his interest in Alcibiades. After Socrates mentions Protagoras, the auditor does not refer to Alcibiades again.

We can confidently state three things about the auditor. First, the auditor is fascinated with the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades. The auditor remains focused on Alcibiades even when Socrates confesses that he forgot all about him (309b-c). The auditor's fascination with Alcibiades is, in many ways, unsurprising. Deborah Nails notes that Alcibiades "was descended on both sides from families that were among Athens' first and most powerful, deploying both wealth and influence."[13] At the dramatic date of the dialogue, Alcibiades was about twenty years old and an extremely popular figure. He

[10] C. ZUCKERT, *Plato's Philosophers*, University of Chicago Pres, Chicago 2009, p. 512.

[11] I use S. Lombardo and K. Bell's translation of the *Protagoras* (Hackett, Indianapolis 1992). I also consulted Robert Bartlett's translation, *Plato's Protagoras and Meno* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 2004) and B.A.F. Hubbard and E.F. Karnofsky's translation, *Plato's Protagoras* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1982).

[12] *Plato's Protagoras and Meno*, transl. Robert Bartlett, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 2004, p. viii. Coby also believes that the auditor "seems not to be a close friend of Socrates" (p. 19).

[13] D. NAILS, *The People of Plato*, Hackett, Indianapolis 2007, p. 11.

was strong, handsome, intelligent, showing great aptitude for political success. From the auditor's intense curiosity about this relationship, which the auditor assumes to be erotic, we can extrapolate that the auditor is interested in erotic matters more generally. The fact that Socrates brings up other examples of lover-beloved relationships in his narrative commentary bears out this assumption[14]. The auditor's erotic orientation illustrates the predominant role that his emotions play in his life. That Socrates does not chastise him for this interest suggests that Socrates does not find his interest in eros intrinsically problematic, but that it needs to be channeled appropriately if the auditor is to find education of intrinsic interest. The auditor needs to find as much interest in the learning process itself as he does in the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades.

Second, Socrates refers to the auditor as an "admirer of Homer" (309b). Socrates makes this descriptive comment in response to the auditor's query about his relationship with Alcibiades. In this way, Socrates links the auditor's questions about Alcibiades with his enthusiasm for Homer. References to Homer and Alcibiades occur throughout Socrates' narrative[15]. We should see this linking as further indication of the auditor's emotional nature. Socrates' critique of Homer in Books II and III of the *Republic* makes it clear that Homer's poetry appeals to the emotional dimensions of human experience. It is not surprising, then, that the auditor would admire Homer.

Third, the auditor does not travel in the same intellectual circles as Socrates. He does not know about Protagoras' arrival in Athens[16]. However, once the auditor learns of Protagoras' presence, his focus shifts from Alcibiades to Protagoras. This quick shift in focus suggests that his emotionality also colors his enthusiasm for the sophist. Many aspects of the auditor's behavior indicate his lack of enthusiasm for intellectual matters. In addition to being unaware of Protagoras' presence in Athens, he seems not to sense any irony in Socrates' remarks regarding Protagoras' wisdom. Also, the auditor does not interrupt Socrates at any point to ask questions and we do not see how the auditor responds to Socrates' narrative at the end of the dialogue. Interpretations of the auditor's silence vary in the secondary literature. Patrick Coby takes the auditor's silence to indicate his lack of intellectual aptitude[17]. The auditor wants to be entertained by Socrates' account of Protagoras, much like one would be entertained by listening to a muse recounting a Homeric tale. However, Robert Bentley sees the auditor's enthusiasm for Protagoras as a reflection of deeper intellectual interests. Some aspects of the text support Bentley's interpretation. For example, though the auditor seems eager to know "what is up" with Alcibiades and Socrates (309b), after he hears about Protagoras, the

[14] He mentions Eryximachus and his beloved Phaedrus (315c) and Pausanias and the young and lovely Agathon (315d). Just after these two erotic pairs, Socrates refers to Alcibiades (316a).

[15] Lombardo and Bell note that Homer is mentioned five times in this dialogue (*Protagoras*, transl. S. Lombardo and K. Bell, Hackett, Indianapolis 1992, p. 1, n. 3). Socrates also paints the scene at Callias' house in a Homeric vision (315c, 315d). He quotes Homer in his appeal to Prodicus for help (340a) and in his attempt to keep Protagoras engaged in the conversation (348c).

[16] See Bartlett, p. viii.

[17] Coby remarks, "the companion, therefore, is one of those vulgar human beings who are entertained by the speech of others (347c-e); he is not a *kalos kagathos*, a true gentleman, who participates in a conversation and submits himself to its testing" (P. COBY, *Socrates and the Sophistic Enlightenment. A Commentary on Plato's Protagoras*, Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg 1987, p. 188, n. 4).

auditor becomes even more insistent about hearing Socrates' account: "Well sit right down, if you're free now, and tell us all about it" (310a)[18]. I suggest that that the auditor has the intellectual aptitude that Bentley attributes to him, but that his affinity for stories about the rich, powerful, and famous prevents him from developing his intellectual potential and pursuing more substantive endeavors.

Simply put, the auditor is much like a typical American citizen today. We might encounter this person outside the domain of academia, a person we know with passing familiarity in daily life, but not professionally. Philosophers, just like other academics, generally do their work beneath the radar screen of the average American. Like the auditor, Americans have a fascination with the famous, the rich and the powerful. Most Americans are interested in power and politics, fashion and finance, Hollywood gossip, Internet blogs, and Facebook status updates. Whatever aptitude the average American has for philosophical discourse is covered over by the distractions that our contemporary media consistently provides. The Socrates-auditor exchanges provides a model of how philosophers can comport themselves in the public sphere. Notice that Socrates does not chastise the auditor for his lack of interest in philosophy as such. Instead, he tells a story about his own educational endeavors in such a way that it appeals to the interests of the auditor. He willingly enters the field of public discourse and, at least for a time, discusses issues within the acceptable confines of the public interest. However, Socrates channels his involvement of this sort to a pedagogical end. He wants to help the auditor transcend the limitations of his current social and political perspective. Socrates tells a narrative that the auditor very much needs to hear, a narrative that will show him something about the intellectual limitations of cultural icons such as Protagoras and Homer.

In sum, this opening exchange is a call to action. Philosophers and other academics should engage more directly in the public sphere. We should not cede the discourse of the public sphere to our contemporary sophists, to sound bites from the media and streams from Twitter. We must compete in the open marketplace of ideas as in order to improve the level of public discourse. Academics should use new media to their advantage—meeting their audiences where they are just as Socrates did. What might this engagement look like? The coffee shop conversations sponsored by the Socrates Café[19]: Blogs that bring issues of academic discourse into every day life concerns[20]. Academics should write opinion pieces in local papers and offer study groups at local churches and other community groups. Gretchen Rubin's book and blog, *The Happiness Project*, is a clear example of how much average Americans are searching for answers that

[18] R. BENTLEY, *On Reading Plato's Methods, Controversies and Interpretations*, "Polis", 15 (1998), pp. 135-136.
[19] CH. PHILLIPS, *Socrates Café*, http://www.socratescafemn.org/ (accessed 9/17/2012).
[20] Some examples include Chris Long's Web site, *The Long Road*, http://www.personal.psu.edu/cpl2/blogs/TheLongRoad/blog (accessed 9/17/2012); Lynne Murphy's blog, *Separated by a Common Language*, http://separatedbyacommonlanguage.blogspot.com (accessed 9/17/2012); and my own Web site, *Thoughts on Teaching Philosophy and Yoga*, http://www.teachingphilosophyandyoga.blogspot.com (accessed 9/17/2012). Paul Larson, *The Spanish Medievalist*, http://spanishmedievalist.blogspot.com (accessed 11/5/2012) and Mark Osler, *Osler's Razor*, http://oslersrazor.blogspot.com (accessed 11/5/21012).

philosophers have addressed for centuries[21]. So, too the Philosophy Works organization based in New York City, which offers for profit philosophy classes, online study groups, along with free philosophical quotes of the day[22]. Why not bring the conversation out of the gates of the academe and into the public gardens of discourse. By public intellectual activity, I don't mean that every philosopher should strive to become someone like Cornell West, Martha Nussbaum, and Noam Chomsky whose views and ideas reach millions[23]. But rather within the public spheres of influence that we already engage in, we should bring philosophy into those domains for our own benefit and for the benefit of those around us. Parker Palmer writes, "Good citizenship is not limited to how we engage with the world of institutional politics. We play the citizen role at every level of our lives."[24] Even something as minor as posting a Facebook status about an intellectual activity or an insight gained from classroom experience can bring the work of the classroom into public view. At a minimal level, you are letting your circle of friends know what you are doing in the academic space[25]. Someone might object saying, "Aren't you really asking philosophers to become sophists?" To the extent that sophists practiced their rhetorical art in public, yes, I am suggesting just that. Philosophers must practice their art in the public sphere. In making this suggestion, I take my bearings from Socrates' beautiful rhetorical account of Diotima's presentation of the birth of Eros. In the *Symposium*, she describes love as both a sophist and a philosopher (203d). In the sense that we see our work as motivated by a love of others, we should make that work public.

2. *The Philosopher in the Classroom (well, bedroom in this case): The Socrates-Hippocrates Encounter*

So what exactly does it involve to make our private practices of philosophy public? How do we bring our classroom work into the public sphere? Socrates' report of his early morning encounter with Hippocrates provides one example. Even though Socrates professes to be eager to report his "quite long conversation with Protagoras" and the auditor is eager to hear it (310a), Socrates starts his account by describing his early-

[21] G. RUBIN, *The Happiness Project*, http://www.happiness-project.com/ (accessed 9/17/2012).
[22] *The School of Practical Philosophy*, http://Philosophyworks.org (accessed 9/17/2012).
[23] For several current discussions of the role of the public intellectual today see, R. JACOBY, *Big Brains, Small impact*, http://chronicle.com/article/Big-Brains-Small-Impact/11624 (accessed 11/5/2012); A. LIGHTMAN, *The Role of the Public Intellectual*, http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/lightman.html (accessed 11/5/2012); D. DREZNER, *Are Authoritative Public Intellectual's extinct?*, http://drezner.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2008/05/23/are_authoritative_public_intellectuals_extinct (accessed 11/5/2012); and B. GEWEN, *Who is a Public Intellectual?*, http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/who-is-a-public-intellectual/ (accessed 11/5/2012).
[24] P. PALMER, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco 2011, p. 163.
[25] I have a colleague at Baylor University, Sam Perry, who regularly employs this strategy. He teaches the World of Rhetoric. This is a freshman level writing course with a focus on the importance of taking argumentative skills out of the classroom into the real world. It is not surprising that he sees Facebook as an appropriate domain to discuss what he does in the classroom.

morning encounter with Hippocrates (310b-314c)[26]. The similarities between the auditor and Hippocrates are apparent. The fact that Socrates refers to Hippocrates' relationship with his slave, Satyrus, provides an explicit parallel with the auditor who just told his own slave to make room for Socrates. Coby notes that Socrates has just taken the place of the auditor's slave to tell this narrative, symbolically enslaving himself to the auditor. From this "enslaved" position, he tells the auditor a story about a person who cannot control his slave even though he approaches him as "a tool for his use."[27]

Though the auditor has more control over his slave than Hippocrates does over Satyrus, Hippocrates shares the auditor's emotional enthusiasm, his erotic nature, and his enthusiasm for Protagoras. We see all these traits in Hippocrates' extended exchange with Socrates. Hippocrates appears at the beginning of Socrates' narration: "just before daybreak, while it was still dark, Hippocrates, son of Apollodorus and Phason's brother, banged on my door with his stick, and when it was opened for him he barged right in and yelled in that voice of his, 'Socrates, are you awake or asleep?'" (310b). Socrates presents Hippocrates as an aggressive, loud, excitable person[28]. As the narrative progresses, his forwardness unfolds even further. He enters Socrates' bedroom, locates the bed and sits at his feet (310c). Hippocrates' entrance into the bedroom casts the entire scene in an erotic light. The name of Hippocrates' slave, Satyrus, adds to the erotic overtones of this episode. Satyrs had strong sexual appetites and erotic drives. Alcibiades famously compares Socrates to a satyr because of his ability to attract people to him (*Symposium* 215b)[29].

The details that Socrates includes in his narrative enable us to see how Hippocrates' emotional exuberance creates instability in his daily life. For example, his slave has run away (310c). Hippocrates intends to tell Socrates about this event, but he forgets (310c). Because of his inability to control his slave, Hippocrates does not learn of Protagoras' arrival until later. Symbolically, Hippocrates' inability to control Satyrus suggests his inability to control the direction of his life. After his brother tells him about Protagoras, Hippocrates wants to see Socrates immediately (310d). Realizing it is too late to visit Socrates, Hippocrates eats and sleeps[30]. However, Hippocrates' excitement about Protagoras' arrival is so great that he disregards social convention and arrives early at Socrates' house.

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[26] Hippocrates is about twenty years old at the time of this encounter. He comes from a wealthy family, and may even be related to Pericles. See NAILS, pp. 169-170. Benitez sees him as younger in his middle teens; see E. BENITEZ, *Argument, Rhetoric, and Philosophic Method: Plato's Protagoras*, "Philosophy and Rhetoric", 25 (1992), p. 250, n. 50.

[27] P. 26. See also H. BERGER, *Facing Sophists: Socrates' Charismatic Bondage in* Protagoras, "Representations", 5 (1984), p. 71.

[28] The Aristophanic character of this passage also reinforce the erotic dimensions of Hippocrates' character. Just as the auditor's affinity for Homer illustrates his emotion orientation toward life, Socrates paints Hippocrates in an Aristophanic light to underscore both his emotionality and eroticism.

[29] See R. DRAKE, *Extraneous Voices: Orphaned and Adopted Texts in the* Protagoras, "Epoché", 10 (2005), pp. 5-20 and F. GONZALEZ, *Giving Thought to the Good Together*, in J. RUSSON and J. SALLIS (eds.), *Retracing the Platonic Text*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 2000, pp. 113-154.

[30] In *The Fragility of Goodness* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1986, p. 94), Martha Nussbaum notes that Hippocrates quickly returns to the domain of his physical needs and desires.

Even after he arrives at Socrates' house, Hippocrates' exuberance for seeing Protagoras remains unchecked. He wants to go to Callias' house immediately (311a). Socrates cautions him about the early hour and leads him from the bedroom into the courtyard. The change in physical location symbolizes Socrates' desire to move Hippocrates (and the auditor) away from their emotionally driven enthusiasm for Protagoras and toward a more cautious stance. Just as Socrates physically moves him from the erotically charged setting of the bedroom into a more neutral one, Socrates engages him in philosophical discussion to move him away from his unreflective enthusiasm for Protagoras' teaching toward a more thoughtful consideration of what he will learn from Protagoras. As Hippocrates and Socrates move from the darkness of the bedroom into the light of the courtyard, they symbolically leave Hippocrates' unreflective enthusiasm for Protagoras behind. The fact that Protagoras is usually found indoors and that Socrates conducts his various activities outdoors in the agora reinforces this symbolic movement (311a). Just as the philosopher leads the prisoners out of the cave and into the light of the Good, Socrates moves Hippocrates outdoors into the sunlight. By having him walk around in the light, Socrates channels Hippocrates' exuberance into a more discerning stance that will serve him well as he goes on to meet the sophist himself.

The narrative dimensions of the dialogue allow us to see Socrates' pedagogy on two levels. First, within the temporality of the dramatic events, Socrates provides an external restraint for Hippocrates' emotional exuberance. Second, on the narrative level, by starting with this episode about Hippocrates, Socrates restrains the auditor's enthusiasm to hear about Protagoras. Just as Socrates makes Hippocrates wait for daylight and engage in conversation with him before they head to Callias' house, Socrates makes the auditor wait to hear about his encounter with Protagoras. Just as Socrates provokes Hippocrates into considering what he hopes to gain from study with Protagoras, Socrates uses narrative to provoke the auditor into reflection about his enthusiasm for Protagoras. Throughout this passage, Socrates intersperses various narrative comments that illustrate these pedagogical parallels on the dramatic and narrative level.

Consider the following examples. When Socrates engages Hippocrates in elenchus, his narrative remarks convey his pedagogical purpose: "I wanted to see what Hippocrates was made have, so I started to examine him with a few questions" (311b). Socrates interrogates Hippocrates about Protagoras: "What is he, and what do you expect to become?" (311c). As Socrates' elenchus continues, he emphasizes, on the one hand, the technical nature of what the sophists offer by drawing a comparison between doctors and sculptors and, on the other hand, the fact that Protagoras charges a great deal of money for his teachings[31]. Socrates asks him what he would learn from a physician and from a sculptor and Hippocrates answers easily (311c-312e). After Socrates asks Hippocrates what he wants to learn from Protagoras, Hippocrates admits that he wants to become a sophist (312a)[32]. On the narrative level, Socrates calls attention to this moment by telling the auditor "he blushed as he said this" (312a). Socrates also observes that the daylight allows him to see the blush (312a). Socrates does not say precisely how

[31] Socrates mentions money and payment for services ten times from 310e-311e.
[32] See R.J. MORTLEY, *Plato and the Sophistic Heritage of Protagoras*, "Eranos", 67 (1969), pp. 24-32.

he interprets the blush. Hippocrates could be embarrassed or excited, ashamed or even angry. Nonetheless, he does call attention to it twice. This narrative comment again shows how Socrates' pedagogy works on two levels. Just as Socrates leads Hippocrates to blush when he admits his desire to become a sophist, Socrates underscores this moment in his narrative to evoke a similar reversal and recognition in his auditor. The auditor should feel the force of Hippocrates' blush within himself.

After Hippocrates admits aporia, stating, "By God, I really don't know what to say" (312e), Socrates explicitly tells the auditor: "I went on to my next point" (312a). Socrates' narrative remarks highlight the aporetic moments that he and his interlocutors experience. Here, this brief comment suggests that Socrates does not see aporia as the end of his inquiry, but rather as a new starting point. By calling attention to these aporetic moments, Socrates' narrative commentary trains the auditor to move toward a consideration of what wisdom is best for the soul to pursue. In other words, he enacts the very same pedagogical strategy that he employs on the dramatic level. On the dramatic level, Socrates cautions Hippocrates about the potential harm to his soul (313b-314c). Hippocrates agrees to choose carefully the nourishment he gives his soul. Socrates emphasizes the shared agreement by telling the auditor: "Having agreed on this, we set out" (314c). As his narrative unfolds, Socrates describes the effect that his conversation has on Hippocrates: "When we got to the doorway we stood there discussing some point which had come up along the road and which we didn't want to leave unsettled before we went in. So we were standing there in the doorway discussing it until we reached an agreement" (314d)[33]. Though Hippocrates' initial excitement led to his impatient banging at Socrates' door, now Hippocrates waits at Callias' door until he and Socrates settle their discussion. He chooses reasoned philosophical conversation with Socrates over seeing Protagoras as quickly as possible.

I suggest that Hippocrates is very much like the typical college student we teach today. Many college students struggle with time-management issues, social anxiety, and busy schedules with the demands of family, work, and school, all of which contributes to scattered behavior similar to that of Hippocrates. The prevalence of iPhones, iPads, and other handheld devices create additional distractions to the learning process. Twitter, Facebook and other social networking opportunities are ever-present competitors for student attention. Beyond that, Hippocrates, like the typical college student of today, is more interested in the material success that more technical fields like business, law, and medicine offer than he is in the intellectual growth afforded through philosophical inquiry and practice. As was the case in the exchange with the auditor, Socrates models a mode of behavior that we would do well to follow. Again, Socrates meets Hippocrates where he is. Indeed, he demonstrated little surprise when Hippocrates shows up at his bedroom door. He does not express disappointment or dismay or frustration with the fact that Hippocrates is infatuated with what he might learn from Protagoras. Nonetheless, Socrates does not shirk the task of reorienting Hippocrates' understanding to what is real and abiding. Socrates brings Hippocrates' very soul into the educational process. In the often decidedly secular world of contemporary academia, we might be

[33] M. Stokes explores this notion of joint agreement in *Plato's Socratic Conversations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986, pp. 386-387.

hesitant to make such a move. We might be tempted to maintain a hands-off attitude and not confront students directly about their basic assumptions, about their career choices, and their life aspirations. Socrates teaches us that we should be bold and seize the few moments we have with America's youth to reorient their souls toward an understanding of the importance of philosophy. Parker Palmer echoes the Socrates injunction when he writes, "The single most important thing teachers can do is explicitly connect the 'big story' of the subject with the 'little story' of the student's life."[34] He continues, "If we want to teach democratic habits of the heart in our classrooms, we need to help our students explore their inner potential. At the same time we need to help them explore their outer potential."[35]

How might we do this? Tom Hanks, of Baylor University, meets students every Friday afternoon for coffee. They talk about current events, life on campus, problems that range from the personal to the political. The new Brooks College residential quadrangle at Baylor has taken up his model. The residential college sponsors regular coffee however, and movie nights and presidential debate watching parties. There is a sustained attempt to provide opportunities for faculty and students to engage outside the classroom.

Socrates also teaches us that we must continue this same task in the public sphere as well. Socrates does not simply teach Hippocrates. He also shares what he teaches Hippocrates with the auditor. Similarly, we should move our pedagogical endeavors, which we normally keep in the relatively safe confines of the university classroom, into the public domain. Like Socrates, we must share the stories of our philosophical endeavors with the citizens of America. Only in this way can the ancient remedies that we teach address the ills of our contemporary cities and our contemporary souls.

In fact, Socrates shares two stories with the auditor. The first is his encounter with Hippocrates. The second is his encounter with Protagoras and the other sophists gathered at Callias' house. It is to this second story that I now turn.

3. *The Philosopher Becomes a Public Intellectual*

After Socrates and Hippocrates arrive at Callias' house, Socrates describes the scene in vivid detail (314e-316a). He describes three very public intellectuals and their entourages to the auditor. Protagoras "enchants [his followers] with his voice like Orpheus and they follow the sound of his voice in a trance" (315a), Hippias regales his students with instruction in "astronomy and physics" and "answers each of their questions point by point" (315c). Prodicus, who Socrates describes as "godlike in his universal knowledge," speaks to his students from a makeshift bedroom in Callias' storage room. Socrates' descriptions are important because they focus on the respective teaching styles of the sophists and how they interrelate with their students[36]. His descriptions make the pedagogical dimensions of their activity explicit and underscore the pedagogical

[34] P. PALMER, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, p. 126.
[35] P. PALMER, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, p. 128.
[36] I explore this issue in more detail in *Plato's Socrates as Narrator*, Lexington Press, Lanham 2013.

dimensions of Socrates' subsequent encounter with Protagoras. After describing these public intellectuals of his day, Socrates' narrative attention turns to his introduction of Hippocrates to Protagoras (316b-c). Socrates describes Hippocrates in these terms; "Hippocrates is from here, a son of Apollodorus and a member of a great and well-to-do family. His own natural ability ranks him with the best of anyone his age. It's my impression that he wants to be a man of respect in the city, and he thinks this is most likely to happen if he associates himself with you" (316c). Socrates describes Hippocrates' pedagogical desires as oriented toward success in the public sphere, not toward his own private enrichment.

Protagoras responds by thanking Socrates for his sensitivity in allowing him the option of meeting with Hippocrates privately. He explains the distrust that Athenians often have toward foreigners such as himself who claim to teach political virtue to Athenian youths. Given that Protagoras is in a private setting amongst friends, he can safely present his teachings to Hippocrates. Indeed, he remarks, "it would give me greatest pleasure by far to deliver my lecture in the presence of everyone in the house" (317c)[37]. Protagoras' enthusiasm to perform suggests that he prefers this public mode of discussion to a private discussion. Socrates emphasizes Protagoras' preference by telling the auditor that, "It looked to me that he wanted to show off in front of Prodicus and Hippias and to bask in glory because we had come as his admirers" (317d). Socrates orchestrates the situation to meet with Protagoras' desires. At Socrates' suggestion, Hippias and Prodicus and his followers all come to watch Protagoras' display. Before Protagoras begins, Socrates questions him about what exactly he professes to teach, "Hippocrates here has gotten to the point where he wants to be your student, and, quite naturally, he would like to know what he will get out of it if he does study with you" (318b). In sum, Protagoras reports, "what I teach is sound deliberation, both in domestic matters—how best to manage one's household, and in public affairs—how to realize one's maximum potential for success in political debate and action" (319a). Protagoras's statement sounds quite laudable. Few could disagree with such a lofty aim. Indeed, Socrates responds enthusiastically, "You appear to be talking about the art of citizenship and to be promising to make men good citizens" (319a).

How far we are from this focus on sound deliberation in the public sphere today. Philosophical involvement in the public domain could go a long way toward making sure that sound deliberation is present in public discourse. However, it is the last part of Protagoras' description, "success in political debate in action," that weighs heavily in public discourse today. Consider the recent presidential and vice presidential debates. Much of the media coverage focuses on polls over who won the debate instead of the worth of the arguments presented by either speaker, despite the presence of numerous "Fact checking web pages." Success in the debates is based more on presentation than fact, more on popularity than substance. However, on further reflection, it is clear that Socrates and Protagoras are at odds. Socrates maintains that such an art cannot be taught. Protagoras' fame and livelihood depends on getting citizens to believe civic virtue can be taught and taught well.

[37] Protagoras emphasizes the pleasant aspects of his speech again at 320c.

Protagoras gives what is often referred to as "the Great Speech" in which he tells the story of Prometheus and Epimetheus and uses their story to argue for the teachability of virtue (320d-328b). Socrates describes his performance in these terms, "Protagoras ended his virtuoso performance here and stopped speaking. I was entranced and just looked at him for a long time as if he were going to say more. I was still eager to listen, but when I perceived that he had really stopped I pulled myself together" (328de). Socrates' narrative commentary suggests that Protagoras speech sounds appealing, much like a political stump speech of today, upon closer examination, and it lacks genuine substance and presents simplistic solutions to complex problems. Here Socrates models precisely how philosophers should act in the public sphere. They should meet the sophists of our day where they are and argue with them about the truth of their claims. In all likelihood, sustained philosophical engagement will reveal the vacuity of much public discourse just as Socrates's engagement with Protagoras shows the limitations of his claims about the teachability of virtue and the unity of the virtues.

After his great speech, Socrates challenges the great sophist. Socrates remains unconvinced that virtue is teachable: "I need one little thing, and then I'll have it all, if you'll just answer me this. You say that virtue is teachable, and if there's any human being who could persuade me of this it's you" (329c). Socrates then refutes Protagoras (329c-334a) and Socrates is clearly getting the better of him. Socrates notes the effect he is having on Protagoras: "I could see that Protagoras was really worked up and struggling by now and that he was dead set against answering anymore," (334a) and a little later, "I could see he was uncomfortable with his previous answers and that he would no longer be willing to go on answering in a dialectical discussion so I considered my work with him to be finished" (335b).

Protagoras resists further discussion with Socrates. And Socrates is ready to go (335d). Callias prevents him from leaving and Socrates agrees to stay only if Protagoras agrees to comply with the rules of philosophical discourse. Socrates' willingness to leave the public discussion is an important aspect of what he models for we contemporary philosophers. He doesn't stay at all costs. He doesn't stoop to play the game of public discourse, but he stays under the conditions that public discourse meets his philosophical demands for sound deliberation. Eventually, it becomes clear that Protagoras is unwilling to engage in a genuine dialogical exchange that would be productive of true political community. Nonetheless, Protagoras is forced to concede that his exchange with Socrates was valuable and that the philosopher has an important role to play in public discourse. He remarks, "Indeed, I have told many people that I admire you more than anyone I have met, certainly more than anyone in your generation. And I say that I would not be surprised if you gain among men high repute for wisdom" (361e). Protagoras even claims that he will be happy to talk with Socrates again, "We will examine these things later, whenever you wish" (361e). But now he is ready for another matter.

Socrates responds, "This is what we should do, if it seems right to you. It is long since time for me to keep that appointment I mentioned. I stayed only as a favor to our noble colleague Callias" (362a). He then tells the auditor, "our conversation was over so I left" (362a). Socrates' departure suggests that there is a limit to what philosophers can do in

the public sphere. But that limit is one that depends on the circumstance; it does not lead to full withdrawal from public life. Indeed, Socrates reenters the public sphere of discourse immediately afterwards as he goes to his planned meeting with the auditor. He continues to bring philosophy into the public sphere and in doing so illustrates his desire to find true philosophical community. Chris Long describes the community in this way, "For Socrates, a community of learning is marked by a certain *poiēsis*, not that of the poets, but that of educated people engaged in dialogue with one another, relying on their own voices, in an attempt to apprehend the truth."[38]

We would do well to follow Socrates' model. We have too often been content to stay in the protected, comfortable walls of Plato's Academy. We would do well to remember Hadot's observation that "Socrates had a different concept of education... he considered that education should take place not in an artificial milieu, but by immersing oneself in the life of the city"[39]. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by bringing the fruits of our philosophical labor to our communal neighbors. Parker Palmer remarks, "As is true of any subject, how we teach the humanities is as important as that we teach them."[40] While I agree with his sentiment, in terms of bringing our philosophical work into the world, exactly how we do it may be less important than that we do it.

In closing, I will suggest two dimensions of our contemporary culture that illustrate the need for philosophical engagement in the public sphere: the perception of higher education itself and the level of public discourse about our shared political future. First, concerning the value of higher education itself. Unfortunately, higher education is valued primarily as a means to an end of gainful employment and increasingly devalued even in those terms. Many dimensions of the "world around us" reinforce the more pervasive view that measures the value of a college education primarily in terms of the extrinsic goods it can provide: a good job, good business connections, entry into a good medical, law, business school or graduate school[41]. Viewed even more pragmatically or cynically, given the prolonged stage of adolescence in contemporary American culture, college becomes a necessary social holding pen, where students gain a certain level of much needed maturity along with a set of marketable skills that will, at least in theory, enable them to compete in the global marketplace. Given the complexities of the contemporary cultural context in which they were raised, it is not surprising that students often have difficulty seeing liberal education as an end in itself. In a similar vein, it is worth noting

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[38] Long continues, "This sort of making is, then, an essaying that involves speaking and listening in turn; it is deeply dialogical, self-reliant and communal. Indeed, it involves a testing not only of ideas, but also of each individual member of the community of learning." See his *Crisis of Community: The Topology of Socratic Politics in the* Protagoras, "Epoché", 15 (2011), p. 368.

[39] P. HADOT, *What is Ancient Philosophy*, p. 60.

[40] P. PALMER, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, p. 135.

[41] The governor of South Carolina has proposed a bill that higher education requests for funding be evaluated in terms of graduation rates, the rate of graduates who get a job immediately upon graduation and the economic impact of a program (National Public Radio report on October 11, 2012). Universities should be held accountable for their graduation rates. However, the continuation of state funding based on immediate employment prioritizes short term ends over long term ends. It incentivizes programs of study that are focus on job skill training with an immediate market niche rather than programs of study that develop broad humanistic education.

that the issue of higher and primary education and how the citizenry should support it has been at issue in a number of states lately. The scandals related to various high profile sports programs such as the sexual abuse cases at Penn State and the sexual assault charges brought against a player at Florida State have contributed to the view of universities as corrupt businesses or entities concerned more with the cultivation of profit through ticket sales and alumni contributions than the cultivation of moral behavior in students and faculty. I believe that academics must enter the public domain to combat these misperceptions about the public value of education.

Concerning the second matter, that the public sphere is shockingly devoid of meaningful philosophical exchange about ideas, seems a commonplace observation to make. Public discourse is often reduced to the exchange of shallow generalizations aimed at increased polarization between people with differing ideas about the communal good. One only need listen to Fox News, glance at Facebook feeds, and gaze at billboards in central Texas to see the increasingly vitriolic rhetoric of political campaigns. For example, one billboard on the outskirts of Waco describes Obama as a socialist. Another plays on his first campaign slogan and says "Bankrupt America Now? Yes We Can." While anti-Romney billboards do not appear along the 1-35 corridor of Texas, references to his "binders full of women," the "forty-seven percent," and his willingness to "let Detroit go bankrupt" abound in the social media. With such polarized visions of America's future, there is no almost space for civil disagreement, much less sustained philosophical inquiry into what is genuinely best for the country. Philosophers are uniquely suited to lead communities in debate about the matters that matter and yet we relinquish this space to politicians, pundits, and other private citizens. We must return to the Socratic model and find our place in the contemporary agora, the marketplace of ideas.