

XXX. The "Fallacy" in *Protagoras* 349D–350C

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Πῶς οὖν, ἔφην ἐγώ, λέγεις τοὺς ἀνδρείους; οὐχὶ τοὺς θαρραλέους εἶναι; — Καὶ νῦν γ', ἔφη. — Οὐκοῦν οὗτοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οἱ οὕτω θαρραλέοι ὄντες οὐκ ἀνδρείοι ἀλλὰ μαινόμενοι φαίνονται; καὶ ἐκεῖ αὖ οἱ σοφώτατοι οὗτοι καὶ θαρραλεώτατοί εἰσιν, θαρραλεώτατοι δὲ ὄντες ἀνδρειότατοι; καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἡ σοφία ἂν ἀνδρεία εἴη; (350B6–C5)

It is an old question whether Socrates or Protagoras has the better of the short exchange which begins in 349D and ends with the above words. There is a flaw somewhere in the argument, but where it lies is much disputed. Commentaries on the passage show an amazing variety in their explanations of the reasoning involved.¹ Protagoras' own explanation is that Socrates has reached the above conclusion by wrongly turning the proposition "The courageous are daring" into its converse, "The daring are courageous" (350C). Socrates, in not replying to his criticism,

¹ The following books and articles, which deal with the passage in question, will hereafter be cited by author or editor: Platonis *Protagoras*, ed. J. **Adam** and A. M. **Adam** (Cambridge 1893); O. **Apelt**, *Platons Dialog Protagoras*² (Leipzig 1922); H. **von Arnim**, *Platons Jugenddialoge* (Leipzig and Berlin 1914); R. S. **Bluck**, *Plato's Life and Thought* (London 1949); H. **Bonitz**, *Platonische Studien*³ (Berlin 1886); A. J. **Festugière**, "Sur un passage difficile du *Protagoras*," *BCH* 70 (1946) 179–86; P. **Friedländer**, *Platon*, Band 2² (Berlin 1957); A. **Gercke**, "Eine Niederlage des Sokrates," *Neue Jahrb. für das klass. Altertum* 41 (1918) 145–91; O. **Gigon**, "Studien zu Platons *Protagoras*," *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl* (Basel 1946) 91–152; T. **Gomperz**, *Griechische Denker*², 3 vols. (Leipzig 1903–9); G. M. A. **Grube**, "The Structural Unity of the *Protagoras*," *CQ* 27 (1933) 203–7; W. R. M. **Lamb**, *Plato, with an English Translation*, 4: *Laches, Protagoras* etc., Loeb Classical Library (London, New York 1924); Platon, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 4: *Protagoras*⁷, ed. W. **Nestle** (Leipzig, Berlin 1931); H. **Pestalozzi**, *Zur Auffassung von Platons Protagoras* (Zurich 1913); M. **Pohlenz**, *Aus Platos Werdezeit* (Berlin 1913); H. **Raeder**, *Platons philosophische Entwicklung* (Leipzig 1905); C. **Ritter**, *Platon*, 2 vols. (Munich 1910–23); *Platons ausgewählte Dialoge*, 2: *Protagoras*⁴, ed. H. **Sauppe** (Berlin 1884); *Platonis Opera quae feruntur omnia*, 7: *Euthydemus, Protagoras*, ed. M. **Schanz** (Leipzig 1880); P. **Shorey**, *What Plato Said* (Chicago 1933); *Platonis Opera omnia*, 2.2: *Protagoras*⁵, ed. G. **Stallbaum** and J. S. **Kroschel** (Leipzig 1865); A. E. **Taylor**, *Plato, the Man and His Work* (New York 1929); G. **Teichmüller**, *Literarische Fehden im vierten Jahrhundert vor Christus*, 2 vols. (Breslau 1881–84); *Plato's Protagoras*, Jowett's trans. revised by M. Ostwald, ed. with introduction by G. Vlastos (New York 1956).

has lent color to the suspicions of those who, like Protagoras, see a fallacy in his argument in 350. Socrates, according to them, has either faltered in his use of logic, or else has tried some deliberate verbal trickery and been caught at it. Both these charges, I hope to show, are wrong. The argument undoubtedly goes awry, but this is due to a misunderstanding. To be specific, Socrates' words at 350B6 (πῶς οὖν, ἔφην ἐγώ, λέγεις τοὺς ἀνδρείους; οὐχὶ τοὺς θαρραλέους εἶναι;) contain, in question form, an identity-proposition, properly phrased and intended as such. Protagoras understands it, wrongly, as a mere predication, and answers yes. He has assented to such a predication a few lines before (349E2), and he does not see the difference between the two questions. This way of reading the passage validates Socrates' conclusion and explains as well Protagoras' sharp objection to it.

I justify this interpretation on the broad grounds that the *Protagoras* is dramatic as well as philosophic. Like other Platonic dialogues, its interest is not purely theoretical; it illustrates as well the procedure of philosophical discussion. As a general statement this hardly needs proof. When applied to the passage in question it means that we have before us not a sequence of questions and answers representing an ideal logical argument, but a dramatized personal dialogue. Now personal dialogues run the hazards of ill-temper, slowness of mind, and misunderstanding, among other things. Protagoras' ill-temper has almost brought this dialogue to a halt already (333E). He is not slow-witted, like Euthyphro and Hippias, but he is displeased with the technique of short questions and answers (334D), and his impatience makes a misunderstanding dramatically plausible. Socrates elsewhere, in the *Gorgias* (454c), emphasizes the great importance of patience in philosophical inquiry, and the need sometimes for repetitious questioning. The object is "that we may not get into the habit of guessing and prematurely snatching up each other's words" (ἵνα μὴ ἐπιζώμεθα ὑπονοοῦντες προαρπάζειν ἀλλήλων τὰ λεγόμενα). I suggest that the passage in *Protagoras* 349D–350C is meant to illustrate this hazard to philosophical discussion, and to teach, by negative example, the value of careful procedure.

The passage runs as follows. Protagoras has announced that he regards courage as quite different from wisdom, temperance, justice, and holiness (349D). "Do you call the courageous daring or something else?" asks Socrates (πότερον τοὺς ἀνδρείους

θαρραλέους λέγεις ἢ ἄλλο τι;).² Protagoras calls them daring, but it is not yet clear whether he means that "courageous" and "daring" are interchangeable terms or that the courageous form a sub-class of the daring; nor is it clear what Socrates thinks he means. The likelihood, however, is that Socrates, having just heard that Protagoras would apply the term "courageous" to certain unjust, impious, intemperate, and stupid men (349d), decides that Protagoras is using "courageous" as he, Socrates, would use "daring." He asks him, therefore, if by "courageous" he means "daring," but his question as put ("Do you call the courageous daring?") is not logically exact. Therefore, Protagoras is committed only to the predication: the courageous are daring.

"Do you say virtue is a noble thing?" asks Socrates, and Protagoras finds it most noble. "Part base and part noble, or all noble?" "All noble, in the highest possible degree," is the reply. This implies, of course, that courage, a virtue, is entirely noble. Socrates seems to be leading up to a separation of the daring into the nobly daring and those in whom daring is base. Only to the former could one think of applying the adjective "courageous," since courage is entirely noble. If Protagoras can then be made to admit that all noble daring involves knowledge, Socrates will have made his point against Protagoras' assertion in 349d that ἡ δὲ ἀνδρεία πάνυ πολὺ διαφέρειν πάντων τούτων. He will have proved that the courageous are wise.³

"Who dives daringly?" The divers. "Because they know how, or for some other reason?" "Because they know how," is Protagoras' answer. And so too with horsemen and peltasts. Protagoras now sees part of what Socrates is coming to. In everything else too, he says, those who know are more daring than those who do not and more daring after they have learned than before. On the other hand, there are men ignorant in all the things mentioned and yet daring. Not all daring comes from knowledge. Are those who are daring without knowledge courageous? They are not, says Protagoras, since that would make courage base, and it is noble. They are mad.

² In Socrates' later summary (359b) the question appears in the form *ἡρόμην δ' οὖν τοῦτον εἰ τοὺς ἀνδρείους λέγοι θαρραλέους*.

³ See *Meno* 87c-89a, where Socrates convinces Meno with just such an argument, though on a broader scale. The question there is whether virtue is knowledge. Daring and courage are mentioned in 88b.

But if Protagoras thinks that some daring men are not courageous, there is need to clarify his earlier connection of the daring and the courageous. πῶς οὖν, ἔφην ἐγώ, λέγεις τοὺς ἀνδρείους; οὐχὶ τοὺς θαρραλέους εἶναι; This is not, in form at least, what Socrates asked him earlier. This later question is translated, “What do you mean by ‘the courageous’? Do you not mean that they are the daring?” Socrates, that is, asks Protagoras if he meant, in replying to the earlier question, that the courageous and the daring form coextensive classes, that “courageous” and “daring” are interchangeable. Not all scholars accept this interpretation of the question, which hinges upon the use of τοὺς before θαρραλέους. Those who comment on the passage assume, usually without discussion, either that τοὺς does signify an identity-proposition (e.g. Adam, Eckert, Apelt, von Arnim, and Sauppe, who excise it for that reason) or that it does not (e.g. Nestle, Bluck, Grube, Vlastos, Teichmüller, and the edition of Stallbaum and Kroschel).⁴ Translators, likewise, vary between “What then, I asked, do you mean by courageous men? Surely the same as bold men?” (Lamb) and “Then what do you mean when you speak of the courageous? Do you not mean that they are confident?” (Ostwald)

The evidence of Greek and Platonic usage, I believe, supports the former version. Since the question is important for an understanding of the passage, and has been little treated, it is worth pausing over. A. Procksch, in a long article devoted to the kind of grammatical point involved here, says: “Die bedeutung des artikels beim prädikat ist immer die der identität oder (negiert, oder wenn das prädikat θάτερον oder τούναντίον ist) nicht-identität, mag dieselbe nun eine begriffliche oder thatsächliche sein.”⁵ Platonic usage supports Procksch’s conclusion. In Plato there are many ways of identifying individual with individual,

⁴ See note 10.

⁵ “Über den gebrauch des artikels, insbesondre beim prädikat,” *Philologus* 40 (1881) 47. A similar conclusion was reached earlier by L. Dornseiffen, in his *De articulo apud Graecos, eiusque usu in praedicato* (Amsterdam 1856) 26. The wording of standard reference works is corroborative. H. W. Smyth’s *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1956) says: “Even in the predicate the article is used with a noun referring to a definite object [italics mine] (an individual or a class) that is well known, previously mentioned or hinted at, or identical with the subject” (page 292). Cf. the similar explanations in B. L. Gildersleeve and C. W. E. Miller, *Syntax of Classical Greek* (New York 1900–11) 2.324, and R. Kühner and B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache* (Hanover, Leipzig 1898–1904) 2³.1.592.

class with class, or form with form, and of denying such identity.⁶ One frequently used way takes the forms "The *A* is (are) the *B*" and "I mean by (λέγω) the *A* the *B*." For example, in *Gorgias* 489E, Socrates asks Callicles: τοὺς βελτίους καὶ κρείττους πότερον τοὺς φρονιμωτέρους λέγεις ἢ ἄλλους τινάς; Callicles answers yes, and this is later thrown back at him as a definition (491c), which is one type of identity-proposition.⁷ The question in *Euthydemus* 277c also clearly involves identification of classes: πότερον οὖν εἰσιν οἱ λαμβάνοντες ὅτι οὖν οἱ ἔχοντες ἤδη ἢ οἱ ἄν μὴ ἔχωσιν; In *Theaetetus* 205A–B a discussion about the syllable and its letters is summarized in a question which refers to their relationship in three different phrases: οὐκ, εἴπερ (1) ἢ συλλαβὴ μὴ τὰ στοιχεῖα ἐστίν, ἀνάγκη (2) αὐτὴν μὴ ὡς μέρος ἔχειν ἐαυτῆς τὰ στοιχεῖα, ἢ (3) ταὐτὸν οὖσαν αὐτοῖς ὁμοίως ἐκείνοις γνωστὴν εἶναι; As the question implies, and the context confirms, (1), (2), and the contrary of (3) logically entail one another. The contrary of (1) is therefore an identity-proposition of the form "The *A* is the *B*." In *Protagoras* 312c Socrates asks τί ἡγῆ εἶναι τὸν σοφιστὴν; and Hippocrates answers that τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν τῶν σοφῶν ἐπιστήμονα. But would it not be possible to say this about painters and carpenters too, asks Socrates, ὅτι οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ τῶν σοφῶν ἐπιστήμονες? He then shows that neither is a satisfactory definition. But the second is an attempt to answer the supposed question τί ἡγῆ εἶναι τὸν ζωγράφον καὶ τὸν τέκτονα; and we should expect the reply to this to be cast in the form of a definition, however faulty the conception. Socrates, in fact, criticizes the inaccuracy of the conception, not the form of the reply. And the form of this definition is "The *A* are the *B*." In *Republic* 509E Socrates is listing the sub-classes which constitute the class of εἰκόνες. He says: λέγω δὲ τὰς εἰκόνας πρῶτον μὲν τὰς σκιάς, ἔπειτα τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι φαντάσματα . . . καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον . . . The form is "I mean by the *A*, the *B* and the *C* . . . and the *D*." It is an identity-proposition with compound predicate.

⁶ The most obvious way, perhaps, is εἶναι ταὐτόν, often with the dative (e.g. *Theaet.* 205B, *Euthyphro* 7A, *Phaedo* 74C). Some other formulas are: "I call the *A* and the *B* the same thing" (*Theaet.* 204A), "the same definition belongs to the *A* and the *B*" (*Gorgias* 488C-D), "it is impossible for something to be *A* and not-*B*, or to be *B* and not-*A*" (the question in *Gorgias* 488C, 7–8 implies this formula), "the *A* are *B*, and the *B* are *A*" (*Protag.* 350C).

⁷ Socrates' question is also so understood by Gildersleeve and Miller (*Syntax* 2.326–27).

In other Platonic passages where statements of the form “The *A* are the *B*” are found, it is likely if not demonstrable that an identity-proposition is meant. I have seen no examples where one is clearly not meant.⁸ The normal meaning in Plato, therefore, of statements of the form “The *A* are the *B*” is the assertion of identity of groups or of classes. This is one reason for believing that Socrates means his question at *Protagoras* 350B, 6–7 in this sense. A second reason is that in 349D Protagoras said that a man can be courageous and yet unjust, impious, intemperate, and stupid. This would naturally suggest to Socrates that he identifies courage with mere daring,⁹ and would prompt him to ask Protagoras if he does indeed so identify them. His question is put first at 349E, 2, but not accurately enough, and is repeated with more precision at 350B, 6–7. A third reason is that to assume that Socrates understands οὐχὶ τοὺς θαρραλέους εἶναι as involving an identity-proposition allows us to explain coherently the rest of his remarks, in 350C, 1–5. This will be shown in a moment.

The surprising thing, however, is that Protagoras’ answer to the question is καὶ νῦν γε. He does not understand it to be any different from the earlier question. Furthermore, his subsequent remarks (350C, 6 ff.) show that he meant to admit that the courageous are daring but not that “courageous” and “daring” are interchangeable. He is quite capable of making that distinction, as he will show in a minute. For the moment, however, he allows Socrates to misunderstand his position. Protagoras is at fault here. He is chafing a bit under the deliberate pace of the Socratic method. Does he say that virtue is a noble thing? Of course he does, εἰ μὴ μαίνομαί γε. And all the slow talk about divers, horsemen, and peltasts he cuts short with a καὶ τὰ ἄλλα γε

⁸ See *Euthydemus* 275D, 276A, *Protag.* 342B, *Hippias Major* 284E, *Gorgias* 456A, 483B, 491E. The use of the singular of the article in both subject and predicate is frequent in Plato to assert or deny the identity of forms or, less frequently, individuals. Examples are found in *Hippias Major* 296D, 296E (τὸ ὠφέλιμον ἄρα εὐοικεν ἡμῖν εἶναι τὸ καλόν), 298A (τὸ καλὸν ἐστὶ τὸ δι’ ἀκοῆς τε καὶ δι’ ὀψεως ἡδύ . . . This quotation and the preceding one are replies to the question framed in 287D, ὅτι ἐστὶ τὸ καλόν, which is there explicitly distinguished from τί ἐστὶ καλόν), *Hippias Minor* 376B, *Protag.* 312C, 341D, *Crat.* 417D, 419C, *Symp.* 204C, *Rep.* 338C, 347E, 608E, *Sophist* 224C.

⁹ Taylor has seen this implied link in the argument. He says (257–58) that Protagoras’ separation of courage from the other virtues “amounts to identifying ‘the valiant’ with the ‘confident’ or ‘fearless’ (θαρραλέοι).” True, continues Taylor, Protagoras protests in 350C that he has not identified them explicitly, but he does not see that “Socrates’ real object was simply to lead up to the making of the distinction.”

πάντα, εἰ τοῦτο ζητεῖς . . . There is a touch of impatience in his καὶ νῦν γε. There well might be, since he has heard that question once before, as it seems to him. But the two questions were slightly different, and in his impatience he failed to notice that. But the fault is partly Socrates' too, in not having framed his first question more clearly. ὑπονοοῦντες προαρπάζουσι ἀλλήλων τὰ λεγόμενα.

I suggest that what follows should be read not as a conclusion of Socrates' own making, as it is commonly understood,¹⁰ but as a

¹⁰ Sauppe, recognizing that οὐχὶ τοὺς θαρραλέους εἶναι as it stands represents an identity-proposition, excises τοὺς in his edition of 1884. (In the edition of 1873 he proposed either excising τοὺς or replacing it with τούτους. Schanz, in his edition of 1880, followed the former suggestion.) Sauppe argues (121): (1) that this is not what Socrates asked earlier (349E), nor what he repeats in his later summary (359B); (2) that Socrates does not point out the contradiction that Protagoras would be guilty of in saying "the courageous are the daring" but, on the other hand, "those who are daring without knowledge are not courageous" (350c,1); (3) that Protagoras would not have replied καὶ νῦν γε or explained his own answers as he does later (350c-351A), had Socrates' second question differed from his first. But these reasons do not justify his changing the reading of the MSS. (1) Socrates' other two versions of the question can be read as inexact forms of the version in 350B, 6-7. (2) As Adam says (174), Socrates does, by implication, point out the contradiction in what Protagoras said. In 350B-C "οὐκοῦν οὗτοι . . . μαινόμενοι φαίνονται seems to be intended to be incompatible with τοὺς ἀνδρείους οὐχὶ . . . εἶναι . . . [and] θαρραλέωτατοι δὲ ὄντες ἀνδρείωτατοι . . . clearly implies that θαρραλέοι are conceived of as ἀνδρείοι (no less than ἀνδρείοι as θαρραλέοι). . ." (Though I accept both these implications, the second one is not entirely clear from the sentence itself. Vlastos [xxxiii, note 34] points out that the Greek can also be translated "the wise who are most confident are bravest," and he prefers to take it that way.) (3) Protagoras, therefore, when he answers καὶ νῦν γε, has not caught Socrates' meaning.

Adam, though recognizing that "καὶ νῦν γε is an unwary admission" on the part of Protagoras, calls Socrates' second version of the question (350B, 6-7) a "misrepresentation" (175) and finds his proof invalid (172). Apelt (137), Stallbaum (148), von Arnim (5), Bluck (68-69), and Grube (205, note 2) all condemn Socrates' way of arguing, although von Arnim admits that Protagoras has assented to an identity-proposition.

Several commentators accept Protagoras' judgment that Socrates is simply guilty of the fallacy of converting an *A* proposition. So Friedländer (23), Gercke (170), Pohlenz (94, note 1), Raeder (109), and Nestle (151). Shorey too (129) and Gomperz (2.258-59) seem to acknowledge the formal validity of Protagoras' objection but regard it as of little importance in the argument. Teichmüller finds Protagoras justified in his objection and thinks the whole passage is Plato's way of scoring a point against Xenophon, who in *Mem.* 4.6.10-11 allows a somewhat similar flaw in Socrates' reasoning to go unchallenged (2.52-57). Bonitz (266) and Ritter (1.333-34), on the other hand, both maintain that Socrates has substantially made his point.

Gigon, who finds the passage very unclear (145), infers from it merely that the subdivision of daring associated with knowledge may be identical with courage (146). Eckert, on the other hand, finds this last assertion made explicitly in 350c, in the phrase θαρραλέωτατοι δὲ ὄντες ἀνδρείωτατοι (followed by Vlastos. Cf. this note *supra*),

review of Protagoras' vulnerable position. He has been doubly inconsistent. In the first place, he admitted some of the daring to be not courageous but mad (οὐκοῦν οὔτοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οἱ οὕτω θαρραλέοι ὄντες οὐκ ἀνδρείοι ἀλλὰ μαινόμενοι φαίνονται;) and this is not consistent with his identification, however unintentional, of the daring and the courageous. Earlier in the argument, on the other hand (ἐκεῖ αὖ referring to 350A), he said of the wisest that they were also most daring (οἱ σοφώτατοι οὔτοι καὶ θαρραλεώτατοί εἰσιν), and being most daring were most courageous (θαρραλεώτατοι δὲ ὄντες ἀνδρειότατοι) since he has said that these two words are interchangeable. "And according to this λόγος wisdom would be courage." The λόγος, however, is not Socrates' own. It consists in Protagoras' own statements and their implications, and Socrates merely points out that these are not compatible with his earlier separation of wisdom and courage. The passage is one of a type also found elsewhere in Plato,¹¹ in

and sees the real fallacy of Socrates' reasoning in the drawing of such a conclusion (127).

Eckert, Adam (173), Pestalozzi (44), and Vlastos (xxxi–xxxvi) break down Socrates' argument into formal propositions. Each of these finds him guilty of error, though not of the simple error that Protagoras imputes to him. Vlastos, whose analysis is the clearest, agrees essentially with Eckert when he finds Socrates' error in the alleged inference at 350c, 3–4: "All Wise men who are Confident are Brave" (but for my translation of this phrase see the text), which does not follow from the premises given (xxxii). Even these four critics, however, differ greatly in details. Vlastos, for example, does not read 350b, 6–7 as an identity-proposition. Eckert and Adam do. Pestalozzi finds implied, though not expressed, in Socrates' argument, the inference that Eckert and Vlastos regard as fallacious; but he does not think it a fallacy at all. He also rejects Protagoras' criticism of Socrates' argument, and he finds the real fallacy in the inference: if the wisest are the most courageous, then wisdom is courage (44).

Festugière says that Socrates identifies daring and courage by a paralogism. But his detailed diagram of the argument (184) seems to imply that there is an identity-proposition at 350b, 6–7, and he does not explain how Protagoras can assent to this without implicating himself in the paralogism.

¹¹ In *Gorgias* 458E–461B Socrates proves some statements of that sophist to be mutually inconsistent. Gorgias has said that the subject-matter of rhetoric is justice and injustice (454B), that he teaches the art of rhetoric (458E), and that in so doing he can teach justice and injustice (460A). By analogy with other arts Socrates uses these statements to prove that the orator, who has learned justice, is a just man and so will never want to do injustice (460B–C). Gorgias, who grants this, has to admit that it contradicts his earlier statement that the orator can use his art unjustly (456C–457C). Socrates uses the premises of Gorgias to reach a conditional conclusion (τὸν δὲ ῥητορικὸν ἀνάγκη ἐκ τοῦ λόγου δίκαιον εἶναι 460C) much as he uses the premises of Protagoras to reach the conditional conclusion of *Protagoras* 350c (κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἡ σοφία ἂν ἀνδρεία εἴη).

which Socrates refutes an argument by proving that it is not self-consistent.

Protagoras, who has been misunderstood, makes an immediate rejoinder (350c, 6 ff.): he does not hold all the daring to be courageous and never meant to say so. Socrates' refutation, therefore, has not been to the point. To this Socrates does not reply, but begins an entirely new and eventually successful line of argument. His tactic prompts the question: why does he leave Protagoras' small victory unchallenged? Those who find him guilty of fallacy may say he is embarrassed, or else too shrewd to dwell on a point he has lost. If his question at 350b, 6-7 is really ambiguous, the same explanation will do. But if we decline to explain his tactic as due to fallacy or ambiguity, we must find another reason for it. It may be, I suggest, that Socrates changes the subject because he now sees that Protagoras' position can only be assailed on new grounds, and he has a sound enough sense of the strategy of discussion to choose those grounds immediately. For him to have returned to the finished argument of 349E-351B merely to redistribute blame would not have helped to clarify and refute Protagoras' views, and that is his main purpose. We must not forget either—Socrates does not (333E, 4-5)—that Protagoras is irked enough and must be handled gently.

For clarity's sake I summarize my conclusions as follows:

1. Socrates, in asking the question at 350b, 6-7, (a) intends it to be an identity-proposition and (b) gives it a correct form, one which such propositions commonly take elsewhere. In what follows, therefore, he is not guilty of a lapse in logic. I have tried to prove this from (a) the context and (b) normal Greek and Platonic usage.

2. Protagoras is at fault in not understanding Socrates' question as Socrates means it. This is harder to prove. To place it beyond doubt would require establishing that the question could bear no other meaning in good usage and in the context. Although the evidence listed above concerning the use of the article tends to support such a conclusion, some may doubt that it can be proved at all and may prefer to acquit Protagoras of inattention. It is certainly true that his unabashed and unrebuked comments in 350c, 6 ff. suggest to most readers that he is not at

fault. Since the point is not altogether clear, and cannot be inasmuch as the customary forms of Greek speech lack the rigor of logical symbols, I place some emphasis upon the fact that (1) does not depend on (2). It is, therefore, from (1) alone that I draw my principal conclusion, viz. that Socrates, in making inferences from Protagoras' answers, does not show ignorance or disregard of logic; he simply misunderstands what Protagoras wishes to assent to.

The *Protagoras* has always been regarded as one of Plato's best pieces of drama and characterization. The playwright's hand is evident everywhere. The argument, now full and eloquent, now whimsical, now close and penetrating, is living argument, and we can never forget, as we can in some later dialogues, the personality of the speaker. Protagoras does not enjoy the Socratic method (333E, 334D), nor does he fully understand its rules (331c). He has not done well up to this point (350), and it is effective dramatically to let him enjoy a brief taste of victory before the final long argument which will devastate his position. It is diplomatic of Socrates to pass over Protagoras' oversight, if it is indeed one, and press the main point. All this shows fine management of plot and is good enough reason to have included the incident. But the scene is more than a playwright's piece of work; it is also a philosopher's deliberate illustration of how an inquiry can go wrong. In other dialogues, the peevish, the pompous, and the dull-witted all momentarily frustrate reason. The argument in *Protagoras* 349–350 suffers the minor frustration of a misunderstanding, but it serves, as illustration, the higher purpose of *παιδεία*.¹²

¹² I am obliged to the anonymous referee of the American Philological Association for having suggested some improvements in this paper. He has also called my attention to the English version of the *Protagoras* (with the *Meno*) published by W. K. C. Guthrie (Harmondsworth 1956), in which the question at 350B, 6 is translated as an explicit request for a definition.