

**A YOUNG SOCRATIC FELLOW  
A CERTAIN HIPPOCRATES  
IN PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS***

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The Socratic narration in Plato's *Protagoras* begins with the appearance of a young man. Early in the morning, a boy who had just learned that the sophist from Abdera is in town and who is yearning to meet him, goes to Socrates to request his accompanying. It is for this young man, and thanks to him, that Socrates, after a careful examination, decides to attend the gathering at Callias' house to converse with Protagoras. According to the narrative, the boy is the true catalyst for Socrates' attention and dedication to the sophist and, consequently, the real promoter and instigator of the dialogue. This paper mainly aims at shedding some light on the ethos and psychology of this young man named Hippocrates. Far from the picture often presented of him, merely of an innocent and helpless young man exposed at the dangers of the sophists' teachings, this work stresses the boldness and excitement of a passionate and impulsive fellow whose irrationality is a potential threat not only for himself, but especially for those surrounding. In addition to the analysis of his ethos and psychology, the paper opens discussing to what extent and in what sense Hippocrates may be considered an associate of Socrates, and ends up speculating, relying on the *Protagoras*, about the possible causes that brought to the corruption of the souls of youth's as such.

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attend the gathering at Callias' house to converse with Protagoras. According to the narrative, the boy is the true catalyst for Socrates' attention and dedication to the sophist and, consequently, the real promoter and instigator of the dialogue<sup>1</sup>.

The young man in question is named Hippocrates. He is presented as the son of Apollodorus and the brother of Phason, “Ἰπποκράτης, ὁ Ἀπολλοδώρου υἱὸς Φάσωνος δὲ ἀδελφός” (310a7-8, 316b8, 328d7)<sup>2</sup>, a countryman of those belonging to a prominent and prosperous family, “τῶν ἐπιχωρίων, (...) οἰκίας μεγάλης τε καὶ εὐδαίμονος” (316b8-9), and considered by the Platonic main character as one of his companions, “ἡμῶν τῶν ἐταίρων”, “ὦ ἐταῖρε” (313b1-2, c8). It seems that, like some other associates of Socrates who complete the cast of the dialogue, Hippocrates is a teenager. He says he was just a child, “παῖς”, the last time the celebrated sophist was in Athens (310e4). Socrates still considers him young, “νέοι” (314b4, 318e1), the sophist regards him as a young man, “νεανίσκου” (317e5, 318a5), and the same Hippocrates considers himself still too young, “νεώτερός” (310e3), to go to Protagoras by himself. Therefore, according to the chronology that places the scene of the dialogue in 433 BC<sup>3</sup> and dates Protagoras' previous visit to Athens between twelve and seventeen years earlier<sup>4</sup>, the young man would be between

<sup>1</sup> Strauss (2022). P. 250, 352: without the boy, the dialogue cannot be understood; the entire work revolves around him.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth mentioning that the name of his brother, Phason, is evoked alongside the patronymic only in the first instance, when Socrates introduces the young character to the anonymous recipient of the narration. According to Barlett (2016). P. 227, to mention the brother, added to the custom of introducing someone by the patronymic, would indicate that the interlocutor may not know Hippocrates, but rather the other of Apollodorus's sons. Arieti & Barrus (2010). P. 36 consider that if family members are to be mentioned, it is because “Hippocrates” is a fairly common name and would be difficult to identify the man otherwise. That it is difficult to identify him is also stated by Strauss (2022). P. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Nails (2002). P. 309–310, places the *Protagoras* among Plato's dialogues that may have a precise dramatic dating. For a collection of all the dramatic elements that directly or indirectly allude to a possible specific dating, see Serrano & Díaz de Cerio (2005). P. CXXV–CXXXI. Nails (2002) opinion is shared by Schleiermacher (1836), Adam & Adam (1893), Morrison (1941), Taylor (1991), or Lampert (2010), all of the placing the dialogue in 433 BC.

<sup>4</sup> According to the commonly accepted chronology regarding the life of Protagoras, his earlier and first visit to Athens seems to have covered the late

sixteen and twenty years old. If so, Hippocrates would be roughly the same age as Alcibiades and Callias, slightly older than Agathon and Charmides, and some time younger than the sons of Pericles<sup>1</sup>.

The status of companion, “ἑταῖρος”, that Socrates grants to the young man, which by default recalls some of the other young men just mentioned, is further completed and specified by the action of the dialogue. The son of Apollodorus maintains with Socrates a certain closeness and trust<sup>2</sup>, the sort of relationship that allows him to both report his daily vicissitudes to Socrates (310c3-4), as well as to turn to him in case he wishes any favor (310a7-310b1). However, the nature and depth of this association, especially on an intellectual level, does not seem entirely flourishing. It is true that Hippocrates turns to Socrates with a seemingly intellectual concern, namely, that Protagoras shall make him wise, “ποιήσει καὶ σὲ σοφόν” (310d5-7). But it is equally true that this concern does not involve regarding Socrates as anything resembling a wise man or a teacher<sup>3</sup>, nor does it involve expecting from him any sort of advice or assistance concerning these matters<sup>4</sup>. This would indicate that despite the acquaintance, Hippocrates does not properly represent the kind of follower accustomed to Socratic pursuits, but rather an ordinary young man who does not arouse any special interest<sup>5</sup>.

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450s to 445 BC, two years before the foundation of panhellenic colony at Thurii. The second visit, corresponding to our dialogue, would span from 433 to 430–429 BC. Meanwhile, the third and final visit must be placed during the Peace of Nicias, around 422 BC. See Morrison (1941).

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the ages of these characters, see Nails (2002). She believes Hippocrates should be at most 20 years old, places his birth around the late 450s BC, and Alcibiades's in 451 BCE. Referring to the beginning of the *Protagoras*, more precisely, to the words of the anonymous companion, according to whom the son of Clinias already appears as a man, “ἐφαίνετο ἀνὴρ ἔτι” (309a2), with his beard starting to grow, “πώγωνος ἤδη ὑποπιμπλάμενος” (309a3), it seems that Hippocrates represents someone slightly younger than Alcibiades. Cf. Sauppe (1889). P. 7, who considers that Hippocrates would be between 23 and 24 years old.

<sup>2</sup> Songe-Møller (2017). P. 168, shares this opinion, taking as indicative of the acquaintance between both characters the fact that Socrates recognizes his voice (310b3-4).

<sup>3</sup> Strauss (2022). P. 97; Goldberg (1983). P. 75; Segvic (2006). P. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Gonzalez (2000). P. 115.

<sup>5</sup> Strauss (2022). P. 2, 136.

In the same vein, it is also uncertain the level of connection and familiarity this young man has with the Athenian cultural and political environment. Hippocrates, as befits the family background with which he is introduced, shares some of the aspirations proper to Athenian aristocratic youth. He seeks from the sophists the education befitting free men, “ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ παιδείᾳ, ὥς (...) τὸν ἐλευθέρον πρέπει”, rather than the expertise of a trade (312b2-3). At the same time, he hopes to become, with the help of this education, someone of renown in the city, “ἐλλόγιμος γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει” (316b6-c1) (cf. *Theages*, *Alcibiades*). Furthermore, according to his status, he has some access, both in terms of interaction and information, with the city's elites and their affairs; he has at least some sort of access as to be acquainted of Protagoras' visit (310b6; 310c6) and of his lodging at Callias' house (311a1-2). However, the scene also suggests that while we cannot consider Hippocrates a complete outsider to these circles, neither can we think of him as an insider, at least not as a first or second-tier insider, but rather, as a third-tier one<sup>1</sup>. This is evidenced by the fact that, despite being aware of Protagoras' arrival, he learns about it a day later (310b7) and is unaware of the coincident presence of Hippias and Prodicus (314b6-c2). But especially revealing is his insignificant role in the scene once he has been introduced to the sophist and the topic of the dialogue that the latter will have with Socrates is presented. Particularly insignificant if we contrast it with the role played by Critias and Alcibiades, or even Callias, at a certain point in the conversation (335c7-338e6)<sup>2</sup>.

To all of this, whether this young man named Hippocrates is a historical figure or whether we are dealing with a Platonic invention remains unknown. There is almost unanimous agreement that, apart from *Protagoras*, we do not have additional evidence to prove his existence<sup>3</sup>. Nor do we have any evidence of Apollodorus, and much less of Phason, who are respectively indicated as the father and brother of the young man<sup>4</sup>. There-

<sup>1</sup> Strauss (2022). P. 95: “So he is not a Young man as well known as is Alcibides, for exemple”. Cf. Nails (2002). P. 169–170 who considers simply that Hippocrates is not an outsider.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Monserrat, Casasampera, and Olivares (1999).

<sup>3</sup> Adam & Adam (1893). P. 78, n. 2; Taylor (1991). P. 65; Ildefonse (1997). P. 146, n. 9; Capra (2004). P. 23; Serrano y Díaz de Cerio (2006). P. LIV; Arietti & Barrus (2010). P. 9, 31; Gonzalez (2014). P. 35.

<sup>4</sup> According to Nails (2002) and Serrano y Díaz de Cerio (2005). P. 125, n. 5, the dramatic chronology would make practically impossible for Hippocra-

fore, the idea that he is a real person is pure speculation. Only Nails (2002) believes so and tries to demonstrate it. Relying on the fact that Hippocrates is a common Alcmeonid name (Pericles' grandfather and one of his nephews, Ariphron's son, are so named<sup>1</sup>), and considering that, otherwise, the young man's mere presence at Callias' house and the public praise to his family could not be here justified, she speculated about our Hippocrates being nephew of the great στρατηγός<sup>2</sup>.

***Boldness and (terrifying) excitement***

As soon as Socrates begins narrating, the first news about Hippocrates are provided. The character of the young man gets at first reflected in the circumstances and the way he addresses Socrates, but also in his own account of the issues that kept him busy before the visit.

Hippocrates bursts into Socrates' house in the middle of the night, before sunrise, “νυκτὸς (...) ἔτι βαθέος ὄρθρου” (310a7). As evidenced by Socrates' worry, “μή τι νεώτερον ἀγγέλλεις”; (310b5-6), at this time, a visit — if it is a friendly visit, and not an assault — normally responds to bad news, to a calamity<sup>3</sup>. So, why does he arrive now? “καὶ τοῦ ἕνεκα

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tes's father to be the Socratic Apollodorus who narrates the *Symposium* and who witnesses Socrates' death in the *Phaedo* (59b). Cf. Altman (2021). For the same reasons, Nails also finds it unlikely that would be the Apollodorus of Cyzicus mentioned in the *Ion* (541c-d), as at the time of the dialogue he would not have been naturalized as an Athenian citizen yet. Concerning Phason, we do not have any additional information.

<sup>1</sup> In fact, the latter is the historical Hippocrates who comes closest in age to ours. He would be Hippocrates of Cholargos, an Athenian general during the Peloponnesian War, and the son of the same Ariphron mentioned in the *Protagoras* being temporary in charge of the education of Clinias, the younger brother of Alcibiades (320a7). See Thuc. IV and Xen. *Mem.* III.5.4 for more information on him. According to Denyer (2008). P. 68, and McCoy (2017). P. 156, names incorporating the lexeme “Hippo-” would be common in aristocratic lineages. On the other hand, Arieti & Barrus (2010). P. 36, relying on Aristophanes' *Clouds*, suggest that in a poetic and dramatic context, names starting with “Hippo-” might be used to refer to young learners.

<sup>2</sup> Nails (2002). P. 169–170. Cf. Lampert (2010). P. 28, n. 17, who considers the identification of this Hippocrates with a certain nephew of Pericles to be murky. Halfway, Taylor (1991). P. 65 believes that, as would be typical in Plato's works, the figure of Hippocrates is inspired by a historical character.

<sup>3</sup> “τι νεώτερον” expresses interest in last-minute events that deserve to be noticed (*Euthyphro* 2a), but not in a neutral sense. Regarding the unexpected,

τηνικάδε ἀφίκου”; (310b7-8). The presence of Protagoras in the city (310b8) and Hippocrates' intention to become his disciple — something Socrates does not see it as necessary by any means (313b5) — doesn't seem to be important enough to present oneself early in the morning to ask Socrates to immediately accompany him to the sophist (310e2-311a2)<sup>1</sup>. However, it is not just about the timing. The manners of the boy also warn about his character and behavior. Hippocrates' way of accessing to Socrates is excessive and beyond all standards. As we mentioned earlier, in reality, if he was not a fellow of Socrates, this might seem an authentic assault. Hippocrates arrives violently knocking on the door with a stick, “τὴν θύραν τῆ βακτηρία πάνυ σφόδρα ἔκρουε”, forcing his way in without vacillation, “εὐθὺς εἶσω ἦει ἐπειγόμενος”, and shouting loudly for Socrates, “τῆ φωνῆ μέγα λέγων” (310a7-b4). His entry recalls the one Alcibiades starts in the *Symposium*. There the meeting is also abruptly interrupted when someone knocks on the door, “θύραν κρουμένην” (212c5), then, immediately, Socrates is able to recognize the voice of Alcibiades, “τὴν φωνὴν ἀκούειν”, very drunk and shouting loudly, “μέγα βοῶντος” (212d3-4). Although the behavior of our young

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unusual, strange, and even negative character of “νεώτερον” and the fact that, in this case, the implicit negative content in the word is intensified by the formulation of the question introduced by the particle “μή”, see Serrano and Díaz de Cerio (2005). P. 125. That “νεώτερον” serves as an euphemism for “κακὸν” is noted by Sauppe (1889). P. 30 and Adam & Adam (1893). P. 83. In this sense, see the translations suggested by Denyer (2008). P. 69 and Reale (2006). P. 168.

<sup>1</sup> As noted by Strauss (2022), p. 95, the visit would only be reasonable if there were bad news. To compare, consider the opening of the *Crito*. There, the visit to the prison of the friend occurs at the same moment as here, “ὄρθρος βαθύς” (43a4), if not before. Just like in the *Protagoras*, the situation causes a similar dismay in Socrates, expressed in the same terms that we have just seen: “τί τηνικάδε ἀφίξαι” (43a1, cf. 43c3). However, faced with the painful, “χαλεπήν”, and harsh, “βαρεῖαν”, news, the ones that inform that the Delos' ship is about to arrive, with only one day left before Socrates' execution, and with the last opportunity to convince him to let be saved by his friends and to escape from prison (43c4-44a4, 44b5-6), it seems that the haste and urgency would be justified. Likewise, it should be remembered that, according to the *Phaedo*, not only Crito but also a group of Socrates' friends made it a habit to visit him daily, arranging to meet for this purpose, and especially on the day of his death, at dawn, just before sunrise (59d1-e1). As in the previous case, and unlike in the *Protagoras*, here the visit does not seem out of place.

man in the dialogue is significantly different from that of the Clinias' son — which partly dilutes the impression of total license, insolence, despotism, and aggressiveness of Hippocrates — we should probably consider the one in the *Protagoras*, along with that in the *Symposium*, one of the most physically violent episodes in the Platonic dialogues.

If Hippocrates' entrance onto the scene is disturbing, the adventures of the preceding hours recounted by the youth are no less so. Through his narrative, the young man tries to justify himself to Socrates for arriving at such late hours. He begins by explaining that, in fact, he had already intended to come to see him previously. He wanted to inform him that he was leaving for Oenoe, in pursuit of Satyr, his slave (310c2-4). He was not back until late at night, then, when he was just about to dine and rest, learned from his brother that Protagoras was in the city. Since it was too late to go for Socrates at that moment, he decided to take a little rest and come to see him afterwards (310c4-d2).

Several other elements from this narrative contribute to the already unsettling impression offered by Hippocrates' intrusion. The impression they offer will be also confirmed by Socrates' subsequent confession regarding the young man's emboldened character, “τὴν ἀνδρείαν”, and his excitement or terrifying temperament, “τὴν πτοίησιν” (310d2). The first and most evident concerns the pursuit of the slave. The text leaves it free to imagination what may have happened to him. We do not know if Hippocrates found him, if he brought him back to Athens, or even if he killed him. But the fact that the slave fled and the terms in which the young man expresses his pursuit, as if it were the hunting of a prey or the capture of a criminal or an enemy in war (“διωξοίμην”, 310c4), suggest that Hippocrates is not a gentle master, but rather one to be afraid of<sup>1</sup>. The fact that Hippocrates is accustomed to roaming outside the city walls at night it is also a sign of his boldness, and even instills a sense of distrust and fear. He arrives from Oenoe quite late when it is already dark, “ἔσπερας δῆτα, μάλα γε ὄψε” (310c1-2), and he visits Socrates in Alopece very early in the morning when it is still pitch-black, “τῆς γὰρ παρελθούσης νυκτὸς ταυτησί, ἔτι βαθέος ὄρθρου” (310a7). Finally, there has been speculation that, like Alcibiades at the *Symposium*, Hippocrates may be drunk and be-

<sup>1</sup> Strauss (2022). P. 97 suggests that, not only has Hippocrates found the slave, but also brought him back to Athens. Professor Sales in Monserrat, Casasampera, and Olivares (1999). P. 135 has the impression that the young man has killed his servant.

have as such. While the reason for this suspicion would be a certain association of Oinoe with wine<sup>1</sup>, one must also consider the Dionysian implications of Hippocrates' object of pursuit, the slave Satyr.

Apart from the fear that the young man's behavior can induce, the dialogue also presents other details that ironically certify the genuinely unsettling nature of Hippocrates' arrival. These include a linguistic slip made by the young man when responding to Socrates, but also a repetition in the use of the term “νεώτερον” and some potential ominous implications in the use of a Homeric formula and in other symbolic implications related to Oenoë. First, it has been noted by other scholars that, answering Socrates' question about whether he brings any bad news, Hippocrates' literal response introduces a certain contradiction. Unintentionally, and meaning to convey that he only brings good news, the young man ends up effectively saying that he brings nothing good, “μη̄ ἀγαθά”<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, a few lines later, when explaining to Socrates that he has come to ask him to speak with Protagoras on his behalf (310e2-3), Hippocrates argues that if he cannot do it alone it is because he is too young, “νεώτερός εἰμι” (310e3-4). Accidentally, the boy's assertion occurs in the same terms and literally responds to what Socrates was previously wondering about with some uncertainty: “μη̄ τι νεώτερον ἀγγέλλεις”; “won't you bring us any bad news?”. Thus, in the broader context of Socrates' initial question, and if we retain the negative sense in which Socrates used “νεώτερον” at the beginning, Hippocrates ends up saying that the he himself is the bad news.

Lastly, we have the formula with which Hippocrates refers to his awakening tonight. The young man says he came as soon as sleep released him from fatigue, “ὁ ὕπνος ἀνῆκεν” (310d1 = Hom. *Il.* II, 71; *Od.* VII, 289; XVIII, 199; XIX, 551 and XXIV, 240). In the *Iliad*, the phrase is uttered by Agamemnon, like Hippocrates, the intrepid tamer of horses, “ἵπποδάμοιο” (Hom. *Il.* II, 23, 60, 230), the Hero laden with recklessness and imprudence, the greatest lover of goods, the one who gives himself little rest, and wanders at night in search of Nestor's wise advice. The formula is pronounced before the assembly of the Achaeans urgently

<sup>1</sup> Gonzalez (2014). P. 36 i 37, quoting Roochnik (1996). P. 229–230.

<sup>2</sup> Kroschel (1965). P. 44. Cf. Adam & Adam (1893). P. 83 who considers it an idiomatic expression that would mean something like “unless by νεώτερα you mean ἀγαθά”, which would be a contradiction in terms, as “νεώτερον” expresses something negative.



convened to deploy troops and besiege Troy. Although he thinks and believes that the gods augur success in the conquest, he is unaware that they are deceiving him. For the Dream has been sent by Zeus, at the request of Thetis, with the intention of restoring Achilles' honor while causing great slaughter among the Achaean ships (Hom. *Il.* II, 48 ff)<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to the aforementioned dream, the bad omen could also be announced through Hippocrates' comings and goings to Oenoe (“ἐξ Οινόης”, 310c2-3). Many critics who have considered the town's significance agree that, of the two demes that respond to this denomination, reference is made to the one located in the northeast of Attica, on the border with Boeotia, near Eleutheria and halfway between Thebes and Cithaeron<sup>2</sup>. That this Oenoe could be a sign of a bad omen would be indicated by an ancient proverb, “Οινόη τὴν χάραδραν”, which would mark its inhabitants as the kind of people who throw harm upon themselves<sup>3</sup>. But proverbs aside, we find ourselves facing a town which is the scene of several calamitous events in Athenian history. On one hand, very close to Oenoe, on the way to Thebes, is where Androgeus, the son of King Minos, is said to have been captured and murdered. It is because of his murder that Minos not only declared war against Athens and subjugated it, but also imposed the sending of seven young men and seven maidens to Crete to be devoured by the Minotaur every nine years (Diod. Sic. IV, 60). On the other hand, the village is also said to have been the cause of one of Athens' conflicts against Thebes, the one involving the kings Timetes and Xanthus. A struggle that, after a clever intervention by Dionysus, was resolved favorably for Melanthus (to whom Timetes had entrusted the combat). Melanthus' attainment of the rule of Athens precedes the first Doric invasions of Attica (Hdt. I, 147, 65). Finally, in the more recent memory of the 4th century Athenians, in 431 — that is, two years after the scene of the *Protagoras*, — Oenoe will be the point from which Archidamus will launch the invasion of Attica, thus initiating the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 18-19 ff).

<sup>1</sup> Arieti y Barrus (2010). P. 37 consider that the formula is a reference to the *Iliad*'s.

<sup>2</sup> Sauppe (1889), Adam y Adam (1893), Reale (2006), Denyer (2008), Serano y Díaz de Cerio (2005). The other Oenoe locates close to Marathon.

<sup>3</sup> Denyer (2008). P. 69.

***Injustice, envy and subjugation***

After Hippocrates expresses that the reason for the visit is due to the presence of Protagoras, Socrates will ask the young man what that has to do with him, whether the sophist caused him any injustice, “μῶν τί σε ἀδικεῖ Πρωταγόρας?” (310d3). Hippocrates will answer laughing, “γελάσας”, that indeed, the injustice of not making him wise, when solely the sophist is, “ὅτι γε μόνος ἐστὶ σοφός, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ ποιεῖ” (310d4). At first glance, both Socrates' question and the young man's answer may look like a mere sarcastic exchange without importance. However, the reader who has progressed in reading the dialogue may come to understand that there is a real possibility for Hippocrates to be treated unfairly by the sophist in case he becomes his disciple. But not only that, because there are also reasons to suspect that the young man feels wronged by Protagoras, to the point of becoming himself a threat to the wise man from Abdera.

What might appear at first glance to be insignificant wordplay, certainly it is not. On one hand, it is not insignificant considering the harm that Socrates warns that the sophist could cause to Hippocrates; on the other hand, considering the sophist's own considerations about justice and its relation to other political virtues. The first of these issues is made explicit towards the end of the conversation with Hippocrates, once Socrates makes clear to the young man that he neither knows what a sophist is, nor the danger he is putting his soul at risk (312c1-313c3). Socrates, using the analogy of the merchant and the grocery seller, warns the young man about the possibility that Protagoras could deceive him, “ἐξαπατήσῃ” (313c8), in trying to sell him, “πωλέω”, teachings (313c8, d3, d5, d6, d7), not knowing what is good or bad for the soul (313d7-e1). Socrates' warning about the sophist's deceptive practices recalls the *Meno*, where the promise of Protagoras to make men excellent is evaluated in terms of justice and injustice. There, Socrates points out, as it is pointed here, that Protagoras would have been celebrated, “ταυτηνὶ εὐδοκιμῶν”, as a wise man for a long time (cf. Prot. 309c10-d1, 310e4-5), acting as if he were a master of political virtue. But at the end of the day, he would have gone unnoticed, “ἐλάνθανεν”, in corrupting, “διαφθείρων”, and making the youths worse than they were before attending him (91e). It is then in reference to this matter that the Platonic protagonist will ask Anytus if any of the sophists have wronged him, “πότερον δέ, ὧ ἄνυτε, ἠδίκηκέ τις σε τῶν σοφιστῶν” (92b4).

If the conclusion of the *Meno* is that the man from Abdera, while appearing to be wise and a benefactor of virtue would be secretly harming and being unjust to the youth, in the *Protagoras*, leaning on his own doctrine, the sophist will defend exactly this same attitude as a civic kind of behavior. In the Great Speech, Protagoras argues exactly that it is a sign of prudence, “σωφροσύνην”, not to tell the truth but to pretend justice when one is unjust, while the opposite would be madness, “φασιν πάντας δεῖν φάναι εἶναι δίκαιους, ἐάντε ὅσιν ἐάντε μή, ἢ μαίνεσθαι τὸν μὴ προσποιούμενον δικαιοσύνην” (323b5-6). Beyond that, we also find a certain analogy during the analysis on the unity of virtue, specifically, when the sophist, subjected to Socratic interrogation, examines whether justice and prudence would be the same thing (330b8-334c5). Then, Protagoras will interrupt the examination with an *excursus*, just before Socrates could lead him to conclude, relying on his own statements, that prudence and injustice are the same thing<sup>1</sup>. As Socrates hinted at the very beginning, it must be then considered as a possibility not only that Protagoras could truly commit injustice against Hippocrates, but also that doing so is largely a part of his sophisticated expertise. Consequently, for Hippocrates to take Socrates' question lightly, disregarding any potential harm resulting from the teaching of the sophist is above all a further indication of his recklessness.

At the same time, it is worth considering what Hippocrates states, playfully, to be the reason that made him feel wronged by the sophist. The young man claims to feel aggrieved by Protagoras, who has something that he does not, something very uncommon, which would be accessible only to a few, if not just to one: wisdom. Before delving into the young man's own reasons, as Socrates will later point out in his objections to the sophist's promise to teach virtue, the grievance raised by Hippocrates could be understood considering Athens' democratic ideals. According to the principle that all citizens are equal in political matters, and to the popular custom that allows anyone to participate in the assembly (319b-d), claims of superiority regarding the deliberation of private and public matters, and the promise of being able to teach such a thing as a professional art (328a-b), may be considered unjust. However, it seems not to be the case that Hippocrates feels aggrieved

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<sup>1</sup> González (2000). P. 127.

based on this egalitarian principle and its corresponding democratic practice. Quite the opposite.

First, it seems that Hippocrates feels genuinely aggrieved because he cannot possess what Protagoras has, what Protagoras solely has. This unique thing Hippocrates yearns for though is not wisdom properly speaking; wisdom is merely seen by him as an instrument for a more precious thing. What truly matters to Hippocrates are the power and the political and material benefits that this privileged wisdom can produce. His aspirations to make himself a name and to be recognized and praised in the city (316c1), in line with the status already held by his family (316b8-9), confirm that Hippocrates seeks a particular political advantage from Protagoras' teaching. Specifically, Hippocrates envies the leadership conferred by “εὐβουλία”, that is, the wisdom claimed by Protagoras. And the young man envies it for his own individual benefit, if necessary, at the expense of the city, not in solidarity with it<sup>1</sup>. In this sense, as Protagoras well knows, the kind of envy Hippocrates feels is a threat to wise men like him, to the extent that they can unleash conspiracies<sup>2</sup> that one can assume that Hippocrates is willing to plot<sup>3</sup>.

Secondly, Hippocrates feels aggrieved with Protagoras, but also with anyone else who is not subject to, or rather, subjugated to his own benefit. The young man, to the extent that the sophist does not make him wise, feels wronged, in the same sense that he would have felt aggrieved by his slave Satyr, who attempted to avoid serving his master by escaping to Oenoe (310c2). The spirit of subjugating anyone else to

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<sup>1</sup> Larsen (2017). P. 96 suggests that Hippocrates' mindset corresponds to Protagoras' promise to teach “εὐβουλία” (318e4). Under this notion, the sophist teaches the skill of calculating how to do things best for oneself, without considering to what extent they might be good for others. Assimilating this teaching would put Hippocrates on the path to tyranny, as he learns to use the city for his own particular benefit.

<sup>2</sup> The sophist claims that his wisdom arouses no small amount of envy in some, “οὐ γὰρ μικροὶ περὶ αὐτὰ φθόνοι” (316d2), who tend to become enemies and conspire against wise men, “δυσμένεϊαί τε καὶ ἐπιβουλαί” (316d3). It is for this reason that Protagoras will take precautions, “εὐλάβειαν” (317b5).

<sup>3</sup> In this regard, it has been noted that Hippocrates' is seeking to make justice for the harm he has suffered. Both Sauppe (1889). P. 32, and Adam & Adam (1893), suggest that the phrase “ἀδικεῖ” implies that Hippocrates could be seeking a restitution for the damage.

his own service or benefit is reflected in the repeated use of the expression “ὑπὲρ ἑμοῦ”, “ὑπὲρ σεαυτοῦ” (310e2, 311b3, b6, c6, d2, 318c6-d1, cf. 317e5), to refer to the profit to which Socratic intervention is subordinated. But as we were saying it applies to anyone. Comparable to the tyrannical man as presented in the *Republic* (574a-b), Hippocrates is predisposed to serve himself and not spare any of the money and properties of his friends and family, “οὐτ’ ἂν τῶν ἐμῶν ἐπιλίπομι οὐδὲν οὔτε τῶν φίλων” (310e1-2), even to ruin them if necessary, in order to fulfill his desire to become a disciple of Protagoras<sup>1</sup>.

In both senses, Hippocrates' attitude towards Protagoras calls to mind once again Alcibiades' feelings towards Socrates, as depicted in the *Symposium*. Remember that there, the famous young man also expresses feeling insulted or aggrieved, “ἄδικόν”, by Socrates (217e4). Clearly, Alcibiades wants from Socrates, as Hippocrates from Protagoras, something that he could hardly obtain from anyone else, being the best or the most excellent, “βέλτιστον”, (218c6), which is why he considers him the only one worthy of becoming his lover (218d1). As a result, the young man suffers from an extraordinary envy, “φθονῶν” (313d2), when he sees other young men with Socrates, to the point that the latter fears of being attacked by him (212d). So strong is Alcibiades' desire to have what Socrates possesses exclusively that he is willing, as well as the son of Apollodorus, to subjugate his own property or that of his friends (218d1-2).

#### *Strenght of desire and shame*

It cannot be denied that Hippocrates experiences with great intensity and passion a certain need to become better. The youth declares that he aspires to become wise (310d6-7). Not only that, but he also longs to acquire that general education which is characteristic of a free man (312b2-3). Certainly, it would be difficult to find a higher and nobler aspiration in a man. But precisely for this, it is needed to consider

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<sup>1</sup> Coby (1987). P. 26 claims that Hippocrates while inventing the supposed injustice committed by Protagoras, shows himself determined to rectify it by committing injustice himself against his own family and friends. Coby himself explains Hippocrates' modus operandi based on Callicles' definition of courage, as an ability to defend oneself against abuse by resorting to the abuse of enemies and opponents. It is worth noting that in Hippocrates' logic, anyone who is not willing to serve him would become an enemy for him.

it with care and attention. As Socrates suggests in the *Apology*, not all those who claim to devote themselves to “ἀρετή” and the care of the soul actually do so. To those who appear to be devoted to it, Socrates applied himself and did not let them go until demonstrating whether they did; and if they did not, he admonished them (29e-30a). This is exactly what he will do with the Hippocratres. The young man looks strong and confident. But this could be a mere appearance, and his power may not be well directed or firm enough to achieve the purposes he expresses. Therefore, Socrates will make him stop and postpone the visit to Callias' house (311a3-5), with the intention of examining and testing his strength, “καὶ ἐγὼ ἀποπειρώμενος τοῦ Ἱπποκράτους τῆς ῥώμης διεσκόπουν αὐτὸν καὶ ἡρώτων” (311b1-2)<sup>1</sup>.

The first thing to pay attention to is the type of force that pushes young Hippocrates forward. Socrates will refer to such desire as “ἐπιθυμία”. This is the term used both in the *Republic* and in the *Phaedrus* to designate both a general desire, and that of the appetitive part of the soul in particular. It is true that Socrates uses it here to talk about those who desire, “ἐπιθυμοῦντι”, the knowledge of the sophists (313d5) and also to define Hippocrates' yearning to attend Protagoras, “ἐπιθυμία ὦν τῆς σῆς συνουσίας” (318a2, 318b4). However, the Socratic insistence on what the young man would do if he had to entrust his body, “σῶμα”, — as if this had priority over the soul — (313a2-6), or the reference to sellers of bodily nourishment (313c8-d4), reinforce the impression that Hippocrates is primarily moved towards the satisfaction of material goods linked to appetitive tendencies of the soul rather than rational ones<sup>2</sup>. The insistence resulting from the Socratic examination on a potential predominance of Hippocrates' appetitive desire would, in turn, confirm the expression of the youth's spirit reflected in the action we have already reviewed in previous sections. This mental tendency was already

<sup>1</sup> ...“ῥώμη” literally means physical strength. However Adam & Adam (1893). P. 86 translated it as “strength of will and resolution”, and according to Strauss (2022). P. 103, here means “firmness of purpose”.

<sup>2</sup> Gonzalez (2014). P. 36: “He is someone ruled by the whims of passion rather than by prudent reflection”. In a very similar sense, Scolnicov (1988). P. 21: “He acts on impulse, not deliberation” and Agotnes (2017). P. 24: “filled with desire”. Songe-Møller (2017). P. 168: “eager and impulsive young man, with little forethought and reflections on the consequences of his impulsive actions”. See also Coby (1987). P. 25-26.

announced by the fact that the boy is constantly in motion or that he tirelessly keeps doing things without a unity of meaning or direction. Even more it is announced by the fact that when he seems to be ruled by rational desires, he expresses himself rather viscerally or animalistically, violently, this is, blowing, shouting, etc., or even, who knows, under wine intoxication.

As described in the *Republic*, the appetitive part of the soul, “τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν”, expresses the desire for something that by nature is beneficial to the soul, but, at the same time, a desire which is unable by itself to identify in what quantity or of what kind of object the soul is needed. It is, properly speaking, desire without reason. Being the largest part of the soul, if not controlled by reasoning, it exhibits an expansive tendency, even totalizing, if not tyrannical. So, if the rational part of the soul succeeds to rule it, the soul will express “σωφροσύνη”, but, if it is mismanaged, the individual becomes “ἄφρόν”, lacking in sense to unsuspected extremes<sup>1</sup>. The latter case clearly applies to the young Hippocrates in *Protagoras*. The fact that his desire and passion are not well-directed, or rather, not directed or governed by reason at all, will be finally certified and made evident to the young man at the light of the So-

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<sup>1</sup> The soul of the youth seems to follow the psychological patterns that Socrates attributes to the tyrannical man in book IX of Plato's *Republic*. There, the type is characterized as one in whose soul the unnecessary desires and appetites have become strong, and stand out those beyond all norm, order, or control. Just as when we dream or when we have drunk excessively, and the rational part, reduced to the minimum expression, loses control of the soul in favor of the appetitive part, this is how it operates the soul of the tyrannical man. Bereft of a sense of shame and moderation, and devoted to the unlimited exercise of freedom, such a person loses all reference to what is just and surrenders without restrictions, in a completely excessive and disproportionate manner, to the satisfaction of his lowest impulses. The force of these impulses awakens in the soul all kinds of whims, from the most extravagant to the most illegitimate. Consequently, indifferent to any form of authority or hierarchy, the tyrannical man, in order to satisfy these whims, does not hesitate to transgress customs and laws or to be unjust to the extreme. So relentless is his appetitive demand that, in order to be satisfied, once his own resources are exhausted, he will resort to appropriating the possessions of others. On the other hand, the analogy of the winged chariot, especially the image of the black horse, may also be applicable to the explanation of the character of young Hippocrates (*Phaedrus* 246a ff). Indeed, Hippocrates gives the impression of being a powerful, energetic, yet unruly horse.

cratic inquiry. Hippocrates, who believed he knew, “οἶμαι γ’, ἔφη, εἰδέναι” (312c5), what the sophist knows and does according to his expertise, ultimately shows himself lacking in knowledge, “ἀγνοῶν” (313c2), and, without having reflected, “οὐδένα λόγον” (313b3), incapable of holding reasons, “οὐκέτι ἔχω σοι λέγειν” (312e7).

However, we should not give Hippocrates up for lost. At the moment when the examination reveals that the young man does not know what he thought to know, Socrates points out that he blushed, “ἐρυθρίασας” (312a2-3), and admitted to feel ashamed, “αἰσχύνοιο”, of being dominated by desires that appear to be ignoble, such as becoming a sophist (312a4-6)<sup>1</sup>. That is, confronted with nobler opinions and desires and being able to recognize them as higher, the shame Hippocrates feels brings some hope that the young man, at least in the company of Socrates, is not entirely lost (cf. *Rep.* 573b; *Symp.* 216b). Up until now, the overly powerful, emboldened, and excited but uncontrolled youth believed he knew the wisdom of the sophist. Out of an accumulative and concupiscent eagerness, he manifested being willing to plow through anything to meet with Protagoras. And he laughed at the possible harms such courses of action could entail. Hippocrates’s strength demonstrated being inflated by the appearance of knowing something he truly does not, and by a visceral impulse that engulfs everything and is ungovernable, due to a certain lack of reasoning. Finally, however, the Socratic examination leads him to declare, after feeling ashamed, that he cannot hold anymore what he had in mind, thus, he relents and yields the floor to Socrates, to whom he appeals for help (312a7: “ὦ Σώκρατες”)<sup>2</sup>, and whom he now shows himself willing to listen to, “καὶ ὃς ἀκούσας” (313c2). The young man even starts to ask questions, not to obtain something that satisfies the demands of his body, but as an interest in the soul and what nourishes it, “τρέφεται

<sup>1</sup> Taylor (1991). P. 66 and Lampert (2010). P. 30. Cf. Goldberg (1983). P. 88-89 and Ildefonse (1997). P. 147 que consider that Hippocrates' shame does not arise so much from the fact that being a sophist is something in general not well seen, but rather from the fact that it signifies being of little importance for someone of his class.

<sup>2</sup> The expression will also appear in 312d7, 313c3, and 313c6. In addition to this, starting from here, at 312b7, Hippocrates asks the first question, expressing the need for Socrates' help with the discourse.



δέ, ὃ Σώκρατες, ψυχὴ τίτι”; (313c6)<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the last words we hear from Hippocrates in the entire dialogue are to make a question about what nourishes the soul, that is, about what truly makes men grow strong and beautiful, which indicates that the education of the young man, the reeducation of his soul, is still possible.

*Among the sons of wandering*

Socrates has already demonstrated that Hippocrates does not know what a sophist is, and has succeeded in showing that, instead of governing himself by reason, the youth is swayed by the force of desires. If it were the other way around, Hippocrates might enjoy the necessary strength to meet with Protagoras alone, but that is not the case. In fact, Socrates neither admonishes the youth for not knowing, nor for being carried away by passion. He admonishes him for being so resolute in his undertaking, without first reflecting and, above all, without seeking the advice of his friends and family, “οὔτε τῷ πατρὶ οὔτε τῷ ἀδελφῷ ἐπεκοινώσω οὔτε ἡμῶν τῶν ἐταίρων οὐδενί”. His attitude is especially reprehensible because the matter concerns the soul, “τὴν ψυχὴν”, on which depends the most of the boy’s success or failure, “εἴ ἢ κακῶς πράττειν”, and, consequently, on which exists the risk of incurring in a greater danger, “τίνα κίνδυνον ἔρχη ὑποθήσω” (313a1-313b2). It is true that at first glance the Socratic reasoning leads us to focus on the reproach for acting entirely on his own. However, a careful look at the dialogue as a whole invites us to think of another reproach, this time not directed to the young man, but to his parents, as those who could truly endanger and jeopardize his education.

In addition to what has already been commented, in the story of the hours leading up to the encounter with Socrates, it is noteworthy that Apollodorus, the father of Hippocrates, is thus absent. From the moment the young man leaves home to go hunting the slave, until he returns, already at night, and before he leaves again early in the morning for Socrates’, his parents do not appear at any moment (310c1-d2). What may seem an anecdote, even though the youth of the boy, takes on a new dimension in light of the absence of all the parents of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lampert (2010). P. 32, to test the effects and success of Socratic intervention, pays attention to the series of reactions that occur in Hippocrates during the conversation with Socrates: “Hippocrates *laughed*. Then he *blushed*. Finally he *listened*”.

other young men who appear in the scene of the *Protagoras*. It has already been noted how strange it is that Hipponicus is not present when the meeting is held at his house, and having Callias instead acting as host<sup>1</sup>. However, apart from Hipponicus, neither Pericles (Paralus' and Xanthippus' father and tutor of Alcibiades), nor Glaucon (Charmides'), nor Philomelus (Phidippides'), nor Acumenus (Eryximachus'), nor Androtion (Andron's), nor Cepis (Adeimanthus'), nor Leucolophides (of the other Adeimanthus), nor Callaeschrus (Critias') are present at the gathering of sophists. None of them escort any of the young men, some of whom are not even fifteen years old!<sup>2</sup>. There would not be many dialogues, apart from the *Protagoras*, in which chronologically, scenically, and thematically this would be possible. Mainly, because here, the vast majority of these are still alive<sup>3</sup>. In any case, the parents of these boys are the great absentees from the entire Platonic Corpus<sup>4</sup>.

All these absent parents are some of the great protagonists of the heyday of the Athenian Empire. In the nostalgic memory of the Athenians for whom Plato writes, these men, led by Pericles, would have shown incomparable political virtue, which explains the greatness the city had and the success of the political regime by which it was ruled, democracy. In contrast, their children represented the other side of the coin. Alcibiades, Critias, Charmides, Eryximachus, or Adeimanthus, among others, were the principal actors of the years following the

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfsdorf (1997) and Serrano y Díaz de Cerio (2005). P. CXXVI–CXXX, pay attention to the problems of historical consistency of the scene, by Callias being portrayed as the host.

<sup>2</sup> For the ages of these men, see Nails (2002). According to Kerferd (1981). P. 17, the sophists started to accept boys as students at their fourteen years of age.

<sup>3</sup> Alcibiades and Clinias became orphan at a very young age. The old Clinias died around 446 in the Battle of Coronea, which is why the first was placed under the guardianship of Pericles and the second under Aripbron's. Pericles, Glaucon, and Callicles died around 429 due to war or plague. Hipponicus disappeared around 422.

<sup>4</sup> There are several characters who, as parents, we do see conversing with Socrates in the Platonic dialogues, and who curiously do show a certain concern for their children. Demodochus in the *Theages*, Lysimachus and Melesias in the *Laches*, and Critias in the *Euthydemus*. However, it is worth noting that none of these characters belong to the generation of Pericles, but rather to that of Socrates, while, in any case, they are not figures of high political relevance.

Peace of Nicias and the ones that lead to the degradation and final downfall of Athens. Some of them participated in the desecration of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the mutilation of the Hermae, the Sicilian expedition, the oligarchy of the Four Hundred, the Thirty Tyrants, or the Ten of the Piraeus. Unlike their parents, they will not be remembered for displaying political virtue or being strong supporters of the city's democratic regime. Rather, they represented the moral and civic depravity, unbridled ambition, corruption and political machinations, coup d'états, restriction of rights, civil war, despotism, and collaborationism with the enemy<sup>1</sup>.

What the scene of the *Protagoras* comes to show with the absence of their parents is that this generation of youths, Hippocrates included, suffered significant neglect from their families regarding civic education. As it is hinted about Pericles, the illustrious parents of these men neglected their education. Socrates puts it this way: while the general, concerning matters proper to the school teachers, educated Paralus and Xanthippus in the best way possible, in what he was wise — that is, political virtue — he has let them wander around like a herd, “αὐτοὶ περιόοντες νέμονται ὡσπερ ἄφετοι” (319e3-320a4). But, he was not the only one. Just like Pericles, according to Lysimachus' account in the *Laches*, many parents, when boys became young men, “μειράκια γέγονεν”, let them go and do as they pleased, “ἀνεῖναι αὐτοὺς ὅτι βούλονται ποιεῖν” (179a4-5). This is actually what Aristides and Thucydides, Lysimachus' and Melesias' fathers, did, focused as they were on the affairs of the city (179c5-d1). This shows how a significant part of the responsibility for the corruption of the neglected youth and for the crisis of traditional morality that will drag the city into disaster lies on the negligence of the most representative generation of Athenian democracy<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about the adventures of the young characters in the dialogue once they grow up, see Nails (2002) and Capra (2004). P. 257. We should not dismiss, as the latter has pointed out, that in the retrospective representation of the education received by the future political protagonists of the city, Plato may want to illustrate the failure of the sophistic pedagogical proposal. However, it is worth noting that what the dialogue shows first and foremost is that the primary responsibility for the failure of this education lies in the negligence of their parents.

<sup>2</sup> For insights into the relationship between parental attention to the education of their children and the care of the soul, as viewed through Xenophon, see Pichugina & Bezrogov (2017).

In the view of the *Protagoras*, this educational gap would be largely filled by sophistic teaching. Indeed, sophistry, regarding the transmission of political virtue, appears in the dialogue as the substitute for family and friends<sup>1</sup>. In this sense, when Plato makes Protagoras – who is of the same generation as Pericles — say that there is no one present whom he couldn't act as a father to, “οὐδενὸς ὅτου οὐ πάντων ἂν ὑμῶν καθ' ἡλικίαν πατήρ εἴην” (317c2-3), its significance is more than chronological. However, such an educational replacement is presented as something capable to even exacerbate the psychological effects of the parental pedagogical neglect. For, while the parental abandonment implies a lack of restrictions and of standards of what must be desired by the young, the sophists, as it is promised by Protagoras, are there ready to supply them with what they are seeking (318e3-4, cf. 313d5). That is, akin to the producers of tyrants, “τυραννοποιοῖ”, in the *Republic*, the sophists' teachings help in the engendering, increase, and sustenance of the unleashed desires of the young (572c-573a).

At the same time, the dialogue invites us to speculate on what would have happened if someone like Socrates had occupied the place of the sophists. Indeed, Socrates also intervenes to offer the advice that Hippocrates needs in the absence of parental guidance. However, unlike the sophists, Socratic intervention does not involve granting, encouraging, and exciting what the young pupils desire. Socratic intervention, as befits a father figure, opts to address, through reasoning, to restrain, constrain, and control their desires. In this sense, and despite the impression Socrates may generate in the general public, Socrates' demeanor is aligned with traditional education, not only because he expresses a preference for familial and friendly advice but also because it is primarily restrictive or disciplinary regarding desires. To a large extent, the *Protagoras* invites us to appreciate through the figure of Hippocrates what Xenophon claims in the *Memorabilia* concerning other young associates. That is, all these boys whose education was abandoned by their parents, while they could enjoy the company of Socrates, could learn to control and govern their desires, even to steer them towards good purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kerferd (1981) who considers that the shift towards sophistry would occur basically due to the specific formative demands generated in relation to the political changes initiated in the constitutional reforms of 462–461 BC, which would deepen into the democratic principles.

However, it is not difficult to wonder what will happen to them when separated from him, especially if they joined certain sophists: that they would end up corrupted (Xen. *Mem.* I. 2. 24-25)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Strauss (2022). P. 271: “Hippocrates was the sort of fellow who could be horribly corrupted easily”.

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