

Tomasz Homa SJ  
Ignatianum Academy in Cracow

*At the Greek Source of European Culture – Παιδεία*  
*An Outline of the Philosophical Premises of Selected Concepts of "Paideia" from the Greek*  
*Classical Period.*

Part I

The Concept of *Paideia* in the Thought of Protagoras<sup>1</sup>

The following study is an attempt to grasp the philosophical premises and/or implications of selected concepts of culture functioning in Greece during the Classical Period – concepts which greatly contributed to the development of European culture. In order to achieve this, we accept the position of Werner Jaeger (the author of *Paideia*, a fundamental work devoted to the shaping of ancient Greek culture), according to which the Greeks passed on their understanding of culture and the richness of forms in which it was expressed to mankind “in the form of a *paideia*.” In it, they enclosed the core of their spiritual achievements in this area. They did this: a) in the sphere of theoretical, especially literary and philosophical, reflection on the essence of the Greek concept of culture, or education<sup>2</sup> (pol. *wychowanie*) and its goal, namely the proper “shaping” of the human being – his spirit and his body; as well as b) in the area of variously articulated educational practice, which was a practical application of this varied reflection.

This theoretical and practical heritage of the Greek spirit, a heritage diverse in its methods of realizing the essence of *paideia* – defined by Protagoras, for example, in the early Platonic dialogue that bears his name, as the teaching of prudence,<sup>3</sup> and by Plato in the *Laws* as training in virtue (αρετή) and the awakening of the desire to become an exemplary citizen<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See: W. Jaeger, *Paideia. The Ideals of the Greek Culture*, transl. G. Highet, Oxford 1946, p. XXII-XXIII.

<sup>3</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, 318 e – 319. Every quotation from Plato’s *Protagoras* is taken from: *Protagoras* [in] Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 3 translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1967.

<sup>4</sup> See: Plato, *Laws*, 643 E.

– while revealing the multiform nature proper to this *paideia* and typical of the environments in which it was developed, also presents it to the world as a reality where all of its diverse forms are marked by a common trait, namely, the *Greek ideal of the free human being and citizen*.

The realization of this ideal during the Classical Period finds its educational substantiation mainly on the basis of the widely accepted canon of an “education, as befits a private gentleman (*scil.* a free man – T.H.).”<sup>5</sup> This canon, mentioned (among others) by Socrates and Protagoras in the dialogue *Protagoras* as a commonly accepted practice, and now only signaled, will be analyzed further on in this sketch.

The *paideias* propagated by the great philosopher-educators are a sort of extension of that “general education,” or its supplement. In the epoch of classical Greece, the *paideias* of Protagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were included among its ranks in the sphere of philosophical thought. Similarly, as systems of general education, they also moved in the direction of educating their adepts in accordance with the ideal of a free human being – an ideal philosophically well specified or worked out within the bounds of their systems and reflective of the way each of these philosophers understood the nature of the world, of the state, and of man, with his specifically human way of being free as a) a “private person” (ιδιώτης), managing his household (οἶκος); as well as b) a “public person,” or citizen (πολίτης), co-creating the society of a given city-state (πόλις).

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Accepting Werner Jaeger’s thesis of the *paideia* as a distinctly Greek form of culture, and taking into account its fundamental contribution to the shaping of European culture in particular, the precise subject of the following analyses will be Protagoras’ understanding of this *paideia*, as well as his philosophical reflection on its essence and goal.

It must be noted that in the time period of interest to us, this semantically-rich concept, which encompasses upbringing<sup>6</sup> (pol. *wychowanie*), shaping/formation (pol. *kształtowanie*), education (pol. *kształcenie*), and culture – and in this sense is irreducible to any one of the

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<sup>5</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, 312 b.

<sup>6</sup> *Wychowanie*: a word without an exact English equivalent, which signifies broadly-understood upbringing, or education with a particular emphasis on the formative aspect, i.e. teaching – often by example – the proper way to live (L.F.).

meanings listed here – possesses a several centuries-long history in Greek thought and practice. Indeed, it can already be found in Homer, for whom it signified an elite process of upbringing (*wychowanie*) – the process of forming (*kształtowanie*) and educating (*kształcenie*) those of noble birth, which consisted in *leading* the youth *towards life maturity in word and action*. In other words, it consisted in achieving in practice the ideal of the hero as it was viewed in Homer's time.<sup>7</sup> The poet seems to point to such an understanding of „upbringing” (education; *wychowanie*) which specified the essence of that maturity in the speech made by Foiniks (Achilles' old educator (*wychowawca*) and companion) to Achilles, cited in Book IX of the *Iliad*: “Your father Peleus bade me go with you when he sent you as a mere lad from Phthia to Agamemnon. You knew nothing neither of war nor of the arts whereby men make their mark in council, and he sent me with you to train you in all excellence of speech and action.”<sup>8</sup>

### Protagoras' *Paideía*

Amongst the philosophers of interest to us, both a colloquial and sophist understanding (Protagoras) of whom a sophist is and what a sophist education (*wychowanie*) consists in is mentioned by Plato in his early dialogue *Protagoras*. According to popular opinion in Athens at the time, he is someone – to some extent personified by Hippokrates – who “has knowledge of wise matters,”<sup>9</sup> namely “makes one a clever speaker.”<sup>10</sup>

We are inclined to say that the popular knowledge of the sophists and their educational propositions inherent in the cited dialogue is exhausted in these general statements relayed by Hippocrates, who was fascinated by Protagoras. For Hippocrates – as Socrates brings to his attention in the dialogue mentioned above – does not know the answers to essential questions regarding the proper shaping of one's soul, that is, as a noble (*zacny*) soul. Indeed,

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<sup>7</sup> See: Homer, *Iliada*, Polish translation by: F. K. Dmochowski, revision, introduction and commentary: T. Sinko, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, Wrocław 2004, Book IX, annotation to verse 331.

<sup>8</sup> Homer, *Ilias*, book IX, v. 326-331, English translation: *The Iliad of Homer*. Rendered into English prose for the use of those who cannot read the original. Samuel Butler. Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, London. New York and Bombay 1898.

<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 312 c.

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 312 d.

Hippocrates is unable to answer Socrates' question concerning the object "about which the sophist teaches to speak cleverly" and through acquiring knowledge about which – in accordance with the Socratic theory about feeding the soul through cognition – the soul is to be fed.<sup>11</sup>

An answer to this question will only be given by Protagoras himself, who openly admits: "I am a sophist and [...] I educate men,"<sup>12</sup> though, at the same time, he distances himself from other sophists, being of the opinion that they "maltreat the young" by making them study "arithmetic and astronomy and geometry and music."<sup>13</sup> Contrary to their methods, the *paideia* practiced by Protagoras is the *paideia* of a free man and citizen's adult life. According to the Abderian, its core will consist in teaching "good judgment in his own affairs, showing how best to order his own home; and in the affairs of his city, showing how he may have most influence on public affairs both in speech and in action"<sup>14</sup>. The goal of a *paideia* understood in this manner – in regards to public life – will be the adept's acquisition of skills concerning affairs of the state (πολιτική τέχνη), and, thus, educating him to be a good citizen.<sup>15</sup>

This educational plan of Protagoras', which Socrates identifies with the teaching of virtue, as is implied in passages 319a-b and 320 of the analyzed dialogue, will set important dilemmas of a philosophical nature before the interlocutors.

The first of these dilemmas is formulated by Socrates in a question directed at Protagoras about the "possibility" of teaching virtue – a question, which in order to evoke an answer will imply the necessity of confronting the problem of the essence of virtue as such, as well as its civic form, or civic virtue. Thus, the core problem will be to find an answer to the

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<sup>11</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 313 c – 314 b.

<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 317 b. In the original version: ὁμολογῶ τε σοφιστῆς εἶναι καὶ παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπους. Πλάτωνος Πρωταγόρας, [in:] *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet, Oxford University Press 1903, 317b.

<sup>13</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 319 d – e.

<sup>14</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 318 e – 319 a.

<sup>15</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 319 a. The goal of Protagoras' *paideia*, understood in this way, is expressed by Socrates, when he concludes the speech of the Abderian philosopher by saying: δοκεῖς γάρ μοι λέγειν τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην καὶ ὑπισχνεῖσθαι ποιεῖν ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας. Πλάτωνος Πρωταγόρας, op. cit., 319a.

question of “the various relations of virtue and its own special nature.”<sup>16</sup> We know the answers given by both philosophers in this dialogue.

Civic virtue is defined by Protagoras as a certain whole made up of dissimilar parts, such as wisdom, justice, courage, prudence and piety;<sup>17</sup> it is a reality whose essence he does not identify with knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), as does Socrates. At the same time, however, he is not able to define it, though he claims to teach this virtue.<sup>18</sup> That is why, not sharing Socrates’ position as to the essence of virtue, his answer becomes the suspension of judgment and he remains silent.<sup>19</sup>

The second of the aforementioned dilemmas unveils itself when standing before Protagoras’ indeterminateness of the essence of virtue – an indeterminateness that retains its significance also in reference to civic virtue – we decide to ask about the source and normative, as well as norm-creating content of the criterion of being a “good citizen,” for Protagoras promised to educate citizens precisely of that sort.<sup>20</sup>

The sophist from Abdera’s answer expressing his philosophical reflection on the question posed should be sought both in the analyzed *Protagoras*, as well as in the *Theaetetus*, a dialogue counted among the Middle Platonic works, where a summary of his views can be found.

In the first of these, the *Protagoras*, the source of the criterion of interest to us, the criterion of being a good citizen – a source defined by Protagoras with the help of a myth in the first part of his Great Speech<sup>21</sup> – will be Zeus’ initiative aimed at granting all people “civic wisdom,” hence, when it comes to the criterion of citizenship (*obywatelskość*), the idea of his divine provenance. Taking into account the question of both the normative and norm-creating contents proper to this criterion in the sphere of collective life, which divine law makes

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<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 360 e.

<sup>17</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 325 a oraz 330 a – b.

<sup>18</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 360 d oraz 361 a – c.

<sup>19</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 360 d.

<sup>20</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 319 a.

<sup>21</sup> When it comes to the views laid out by Protagoras in the Great Speech, I presume, like Ryszard Legutko, that these are the sophist from Abdera’s views. See: R. Legutko, *Sokrates. Filozofia męża sprawiedliwego*, Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo, Poznań 2013, s. 153.

visible and sanctions in the myth, this type of content seems to be conditioned by a) the nature of civic wisdom, co-comprised of shame and justice by the will of Zeus the Thunderer, as well as b) the community-creating function ascribed to it, namely, “that there should be regulation of cities and friendly ties to draw them together.”<sup>22</sup>

The idea of the genesis and normativeness of civic wisdom so set forth in the form of a myth seems to be speculatively developed and deepened in the Great Speech in the concept of “civic virtue” presented by Protagoras in Kallias’ house. According to this concept, πολιτική αρετή would be an ability made up of partial (in relation to it) virtues of a fundamental significance to public life – that is, of wisdom, justice, courage, prudence, and piety. However, what would such a composition consist in, and what ontological status would it have? Namely, would civic virtue constitute only a certain collection of constituent virtues, as its essentially diverse parts, which each citizen would consolidate into one “civic virtue” in his public action, or would it be a virtue that as such would consolidate in itself the diversity of its constituent parts, and thereby be something essentially different from its elements – this Protagoras does not specify clearly enough.

All citizens should partake in this type of civic virtue – as Kallias’ eminent guest emphasizes on many occasions – and only act in accordance with it<sup>23</sup> if the state is to exist. Its acquisition occurs gradually during the process of general education (*wychowanie*) received as a member of various types of communities: familial, school, and state, all of which are its “carriers” and teachers in their own way. In the *family*, this acquisition takes place through the imitation of words and the example given by parents and guardians regarding that, which is just, beautiful, and holy, and how one should act. In *school*, a) by becoming acquainted with examples (in literature) of the behavior of outstanding men as role models to be emulated; b) by achieving – thanks to the study of music and singing – greater mildness, order, and internal harmony in order to become fit “in speech and action,”<sup>24</sup> as well as c) through gymnastic exercise, so “that having improved their bodies they may perform the orders of their minds, which are now in fit condition, and that they may not be forced by bodily faults to play the coward in wars and other duties.”<sup>25</sup> Finally, acquisition would also take place in the state

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<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 322 c.

<sup>23</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 325 a.

<sup>24</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 326 b.

<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 326 c.

community, which – like the family and school communities – also performs the function of an educator (*wychowawca*) of its citizens. This function, on the other hand, consists in “the city sketching out for them the laws devised by good lawgivers of yore, and constraining them to govern and be governed according to these.”<sup>26</sup>

It is worth noting that this universally-practiced system of education, which Protagoras indicates – a system described by Socrates as an “education, as befits a private gentleman (*scil.* the free man – T.H.)”<sup>27</sup> – is something of a collection of mutually-related educational (*wychowawcze*) subsystems: family, school, and state. In this collection, the subsystems are connected by a series of common qualities. We will indicate five of them, which are significant for this educational model.

Firstly, they are connected by the same pedagogical intention. It is one and the same in all cases, though depending on the stage of life, this plan or intention of educating men, who act in a way that is beautiful, just, and in accordance with the law both in the spheres of public and private life, in other words, in a way men should who are properly formed as citizens and free men, is achieved in various ways.

Secondly, they are connected by an accepted educational (*wychowawczy*) paradigm – that is, the paradigm of achieving – by way of imitation – the ideal of a free man and citizen shared by the members of a given community.

Thirdly, these subsystems have the figure of the educator (*wychowawca*) in common. This figure is always a collective body external in relation to the one being educated: family, school, or the state.

Fourthly, despite the distinct character of relationships occurring within the individual educational subsystems between the educator (family, teachers, the state) and the educated (son, student, citizen), all of these subsystems, in order to achieve the expected imitative approach, reach for the same educational means, that is, persuasion, force, and a system of punishments.<sup>28</sup>

And finally, fifthly, these subsystems assume the existence of constant behavioral norms that are binding in a given community – norms independent of any individual whims,

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<sup>26</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 326 d.

<sup>27</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 312 b.

<sup>28</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 325 c – e, 326 c – d.

common to all, and codified by a divine or eminent human lawgiver.<sup>29</sup> These norms, in the form of laws, allow for the maintenance of order in the community, as well as its continuity and unity.

In comparison to this universally-practiced system of general education, Protagoras' concept of *paideia*, presented to Socrates in Kallias' house, seems to constitute a significant supplement to such an education, which in the interest of both the individual and the state. The core of this concept is the acquisition by the adept of that, "for which he has come,"<sup>30</sup> namely prudence to help manage public and private affairs in the best possible way. It should be noted that Protagoras, formulating his concept of *paideia* this way, does not go into detail about the essence of this type of prudence, which constitutes the *paideia*'s goal. Indeed, it is not Protagoras who explains the understanding of his *paideia* in the dialogue, but Socrates, though Protagoras asserts that he shares Socrates' understanding. Keeping this fact in mind, it may be worthwhile to pose the question of whether it constitutes an insignificant episode, or whether it was consciously intended by Protagoras in order to interweave his position with Socrates' understanding of it. If we were to accept the second hypothesis, one of the possible reasons Protagoras may have undertaken such a method of conversing with Socrates may be that he wanted to hide or obscure the true meaning of his statements as a result of their interpretation in the spirit of Socrates. Hence, it is possible that we encounter here the type of statements of Protagoras which Socrates in the *Theaetetus* calls ἠνίξατο<sup>31</sup> - that is, with statements whose meaning is understood differently by the masses, than by his student-initiates.

Indeed, for one searching for the philosophical premises of Protagoras' concept of *paideia* in the arguments invoked by the philosopher from Abdera regarding: a) the possibility of education (*wychowanie*) understood as the teaching of virtue, and b) the genesis and essence of civic virtue, it is difficult to shake off the impression that the concept presupposes the philosophical views shared by Socrates about being as that, which exists, and about the changelessness of its essence.

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<sup>29</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 322 d, 326 d.

<sup>30</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 318 e.

<sup>31</sup> See: *Theaetetus*, 152 C, English translation: *Theaetetus*. [in] Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921.



One is prompted to accept such an opinion by the popular understanding of the myth about the divine *aretai* – or shame and justice, in which, as he asserted after the myth, all partake, as well as about the divine law that protects them equally – given to humans by Zeus, cited by Protagoras in the first part of his Great Speech.

According to this understanding, the above *aretai*, by way of the specific normative contents belonging to their essence and their permanent “bindingness” – as can be inferred from the idea of divine law that safeguards them – constitute the normative and norm-creating criterion of human action both in the spheres of public and private life. At the same time, in the sphere of public life, they constitute a solid foundation for just civil law, as well as an essential criterion for the legitimization of its “bindingness.”

Similarly, Protagoras’ theory of the virtues that make up civic virtue, which is laid out in the analyzed dialogue, also inclines us towards that position. As can be inferred from his answers given to Socrates about the essence of the virtues mentioned, these virtues would be “something,” not “nothing,” and, at that, something “that exists” and possesses its own proper permanent ability (*zdolność*).<sup>32</sup>

## Dilemmas

Can we be sure, however, that Protagoras really agrees with the arguments he presents to Socrates in defense of the *paideia* he [Protagoras] propagates? Or, rather, do we have something like a Pythian oration by Protagoras here, which requires decoding despite the feeling that it has been properly understood?

This type of doubt is raised the moment we take into account Protagoras’ doctrine as it was recounted by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, a dialogue which Władysław Witwicki considered a one of Plato’s middle period dialogues.<sup>33</sup>

In order to attempt an answer to the above question concerning a proper understanding of the philosophical premises of Protagoras’ concept of *paideia*, we will take three of them into consideration. These are his concepts of: a) knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), what it is and what

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<sup>32</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 330 a – c.

<sup>33</sup> See: *Wstęp tłumacza do (Translator’s Introduction to):* Platon, *Teajtet*, translation: W. Witwicki, [in:] Platon, *Dialogi*, t. II, Wydawnictwo ANTYK, Kęty 2005, p. 325.

significance it has for humans; b) the first principle of all things; and c) man as the measure of all things. These premises, key to Protagoras' philosophy of education (*wychowanie*), constitute the main themes of his doctrine presented by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*. The doctrine in question was at least partially reserved for the students of the Abderian philosopher, whom he "tells the truth in secret."<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, he was to teach those who were not his students in a way, which – according to Socrates – was obscure or enigmatic.<sup>35</sup>

Taking into account the first of these premises, i.e. Protagoras' understanding of knowledge, Protagoras, in the dialogue bearing his name, seems to agree with Socrates' stance as to the significance of knowledge to human action when debating the subject of virtue with him, that is, that it is „something noble and able to govern man,”<sup>36</sup> and also that in affairs concerning human behavior this knowledge is achievable on the way of cognition (*γινώσκω*) of what is right and wrong.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, he seems to share Socrates' views about *φρόνησις* regarding its relationship to knowledge, namely, that “reason – according to L. Regner's translation – is a sufficient succor for man,”<sup>38</sup> or else – in W. Witwicki's translation – that it “will always suffice for man's defense in his internal battles.”<sup>39</sup>

Such an assertion concerning the compatibility of Socrates' and Protagoras' views, confirmed, when it comes to the above questions, by Protagoras' reassurance that „my view, Socrates, [...], is precisely that which you express”<sup>40</sup>, begins to appear dilemmatic when we pose the question of what knowledge is according to each of them. Both philosophers' answers given in the dialogue *Theaetetus* differ from one another diametrically.

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<sup>34</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, dz. cyt., 152 C. In the original text: τοῖς δὲ μαθηταῖς ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔλεγεν. Πλάτωνος Θεαίτητος, [in:] *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet, Oxford University Press 1903, 152c.

<sup>35</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 152 C: πάσσοφός τις ἦν ὁ Πρωταγόρας, καὶ τοῦτο ἡμῖν μὲν ἠνίξατο τῷ πολλῷ συρφετῷ. Πλάτωνος Θεαίτητος, op.cit., 152c.

<sup>36</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 352 c.

<sup>37</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 352 c.

<sup>38</sup> Platon, *Protagoras*, Polish translation: L. Regner, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004, 352 c. Translated from the Polish by L. Fretschel.

<sup>39</sup> Platon, *Protagoras*, Polish translation: W. Witwicki, [in:] Platon, *Laches. Protagoras*, Wydawnictwo ANTYK, Keęty, 352 C. Translated from the Polish by L. Fretschel.

<sup>40</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 352 c.

For Protagoras, in Socrates' relation of his doctrine – knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is perception (αἴσθησις),<sup>41</sup> that is, as can be inferred from his line of argument, “seeming” (φαντασία).<sup>42</sup> Such an understanding of knowledge – as Socrates notes in his conversation with Theaetetus – Protagoras expressed in his statement: „man is the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are and the non-existence of the things that are not”<sup>43</sup> (“πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον” ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, “τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστι, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν.”<sup>44</sup>). Evidence of this can be found in the comment explaining the meaning of this statement, authored by Protagoras himself, according to whom: „individual things are for me such as they appear to me, and for you in turn such as they appear to you”. An explication formulated in this way, and summarized by Socrates in the words: „as each person perceives things, such they are to each person,”<sup>45</sup> seems to adequately explain the essence of knowledge understood as perception.

However, in Socrates' thought that is also laid out in the *Theaetetus*, knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), which can be achieved through cognition,<sup>46</sup> is δόξα ὀρθή<sup>47</sup> – translated by Ryszard Legutko as “right opinion,”<sup>48</sup> and by Władysław Witwicki as “true judgment” – along with the connected knowledge about particular differences.<sup>49</sup> It must be noted that δόξα ὀρθή is understood by Socrates as an act, in which shall be recognizes that, which exists.<sup>50</sup> In

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<sup>41</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 151 C – 152 A.

<sup>42</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 151 C – 152 A.

<sup>43</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 152 A. Socrates, commenting on the definition of knowledge as perception given by Theaetetus asserted that Theaetetus “it is not a bad description of knowledge that you have given, but one which Protagoras also used to give”. Ibidem.

<sup>44</sup> Πλάτωνος Θεαίτητος, op. cit., 152a.

<sup>45</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 152 A, C.

<sup>46</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 210 A. In opinion of Socrates „to come to know something is nothing more than to achieve knowledge”, ibidem, transl. T.H.

<sup>47</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 210 A.

<sup>48</sup> See: R. Legutko, *Sokrates*, op. cit., p. 307.

<sup>49</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 210 A.

<sup>50</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 199 B.

other words, δόξα ὀρθή given about something is the soul's grasping of the truth in that thing.<sup>51</sup>

Hence, taking into account on the one hand Protagoras' definition of knowledge as *perception*, with its radically subjective interpretation expressed in the statement “πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον εἶναι,” and on the other – Socrates' definition of knowledge as *cognition* in the sense of right opinion or true judgment, in which the mind reaches the truth of that, which is the object of cognition, the question arises of how to understand Protagoras' reassurance that he shares Socrates' position when it comes to knowledge and its normative function in reference to human action.

If one would want to defend the credibility of this reassurance, then in light of the above analyses it may be fitting to assume that Protagoras' sharing of Socrates' view refers only to the latter's conviction about the fundamental significance of knowledge for human life. Making such a restrictive declaration, Protagoras would not be contradicting himself. But would he not be contradicting himself by extending such a declaration over his fundamentally different understanding of the essence of knowledge, and the conclusions that result from it regarding the ideal of a properly educated man?

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Let us move to our second premise, essential to Protagoras' theory of *paideia* – it is the philosophical concept of the “first principle of all things.” Referring to the myth about the origin of man in his Great Speech, Protagoras seems to agree – or at least not to question – the view commonly accepted by the majority of his contemporaries, which presupposes the existence of things and the permanence of their essence. His *sui generis* exemplification would constitute, among others, the theme present in the myth about the divine norms of human action which are binding in societal life, that is, shame and justice, protected by equally divine law. Assuming the correctness of this sort of interpretation, the „first principle of all things” would be the principle of the existence of being and the permanence of its essence.

Meanwhile, according to the *Theaetetus*, as Socrates asserts, Protagoras taught his students, in secret, a truth completely different from the truth of the aforementioned first principle. This was a truth, according to which, generally speaking: „but it is out of movement

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<sup>51</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 202 B – C.

and motion and mixture with one another that all those things become which we [...] say »are«, and more precisely: „nothing ever is, but is always becoming.”<sup>52</sup> Such an ontologically understood universal mutability of all things was to be binding also in the world of the gods. Protagoras saw evidence of this in Homer’s statement: „Oceanus the origin of the gods, and Tethys their mother”, because in it the poet was to proclaim, that „all things [including gods] are the offspring of flow and motion.”<sup>53</sup>

The first principle of all things, thusly defined by Protagoras, which proclaims the constitutive mutability of the essence of things and possesses a fundamental significance for the ontology, epistemology, and ethics of Protagoras’ concept of *paideia*, when taken with its mythological and colloquial understanding that assumes that each thing by its very nature possess some kind of essence, seems to unveil again the distinctive tension present in Protagoras’ thought and generative of its particular “dilemmaticness.”

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The last of the dilemmatic premises taken into account by us, all of which constitute something like philosophical cornerstones of the concept of *paideia* propagated by Protagoras, was formulated by him in the thesis: man is “the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are and the non-existence of the things that are not.”<sup>54</sup>

Protagoras’ explication of this thesis, recounted by Socrates in the words: “individual things are for me such as they appear to me, and for you in turn such as they appear to you”<sup>55</sup> unveils that multi-aspected “dilemmaticness” which is of interest to us, (among others) in the moment when seeking the criterion that is a “measure” of the actions of man as a member of the community, we invoke Protagoras’ line of argument presented in the second part of the Great Speech cited in the dialogue bearing his name. In his line of argument, Protagoras seemed to share the commonplace conviction that this sort of “measure” is the laws

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<sup>52</sup> Platon, *Teajtet*, dz. cyt., 152 D – E.

<sup>53</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 152 E. This thought, with regard to all things, invokes Socrates in conversation with Theodore in the following words: “Now as for the problem, have we not heard from the ancients, who concealed their meaning from the multitude by their poetry, that the origin of all things is Oceanus and Tethys, flowing streams, and that nothing is at rest”, *ibidem*, 180 C-D.

<sup>54</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 152 A.

<sup>55</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 152 A.

established by “good lawgivers of yore,” and written out by the state.<sup>56</sup> These laws were to protect the societal order of the political community (the state) from those actions of its members which are destructive to that order, because they are based on whim, as well as constitute a criterion, which both the rulers and ruled should submit to. *Nota bene*, this idea – expressed in the form of a myth – is invoked by Protagoras already in the first part of the Great Speech where he discusses Zeus’ law given to humans.

In the meantime, stating that knowledge is perception and that the first principle of the all things is constant mutability, and formulating (on the basis of these statements) the radically individualistic definition of the measure of everything cited above, Protagoras seems not only to unambiguously undermine the rightness of the concept that sees such a measure in the law, which presupposes the permanence of the essence of things and a universally-binding normative assessment of what is just, good, and pious, and what is not. Indeed, it seems that Protagoras, declaring that man is the measure of all things, also radically redefines the idea of *paideia*, whose goal – as he had said – was educating good citizens. What would this normatively objectified education oriented towards the good of the state consist in, if – on the one hand – as Socrates noted to Theaetetus – “I am, as Protagoras says, the judge of the existence of the things that are to me and of the non-existence of those that are not to me.”<sup>57</sup> Moreover, if every man „ possesses within himself the standard by which to judge them, and when his thoughts about them coincide with his sensations, he thinks what to him is true and really is.”<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, if on the basis of the thesis about the mutability of the essence of things it would be proper to accept, in consequence, that taking into account justice, the good, and piety, as well as their opposites, “no one of them possesses by nature an essence of its own.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, only that, which seems just or unjust, good or bad, pious or impious to someone in a given moment becomes true when it seems so, and for as long as it seems so. However, would citizens educated according to such premises be „good” for the state?

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<sup>56</sup> See: Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 326 d.

<sup>57</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 160 C: Ἐγὼ κριτῆς κατὰ τὸν Πρωταγόραν τῶν τε ὄντων ἔμοι ὡς ἔστι, καὶ τῶν μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν. Πλάτωνος Θεαίτητος, op. cit., 160c.

<sup>58</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 178 B.

<sup>59</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 172 B.

## Protagoras' Concepts of *Paideia*

In light of the above analyses, we agree with the thesis suggested by Socrates that Protagoras propagated two different *paideias*, one for the general public, and the other for students-initiates.<sup>60</sup> Within their boundaries, in accordance with the binding premises, the understanding of this concept must be defined each time as education (*wychowanie*) and culture, which befit a free man and citizen. Consequently, this type of hermeneutics would be binding also in the case of an attempt at defining the essence of their intended educational goal, which – according to Protagoras – was to be εὐβουλία (the ability to get by (manage)/prudence) “good judgment in his own affairs, showing how best to order his own home; and in the affairs of his city, showing how he may have most influence on public affairs both in speech and in action.”<sup>61</sup>

It is the publicly announced concept of *paideia* that Protagoras would present to Socrates and the young Hippocrates in Kallias' house, and the explanation of the proper way of understanding it would be found in the Great Speech he delivered there. On the other hand, in order to grasp the essence of the *paideia*, in connection with which he was to teach in secret the truth about the first principle of the all things, that is, about the mutability of all things, we should refer back to his teaching included in the *Theaetetus* and interpret this concept in light of the three “dilemmatic” principles analyzed earlier.

The ideal of the educator present in this concept is the Protagorean sage (σοφός) – a person, who “if bad things appear and are to any one of us, precisely that man is wise who causes a change and makes good things appear and be to him.”<sup>62</sup> Education (*wychowanie*), on the other hand, analogically to medical treatment, is the change of a worse state (first) to a better state (second), with the difference that “the physician causes the change by means of drugs, and the teacher of wisdom by means of words.”<sup>63</sup> What would such a change consist in? In Protagoras' opinion, “a man who, on account of a bad condition of soul, thinks thoughts akin to that condition, is made by a good condition of soul to think correspondingly good

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<sup>60</sup> Por. Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 152 C.

<sup>61</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, op. cit., 318 e – 319 a.

<sup>62</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 166 D – E.

<sup>63</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 167 A.

thoughts; and some men, through inexperience, call these appearances true.”<sup>64</sup> Hence, the goal of education, which – as Socrates stated and Protagoras confirmed – was to be the educating of a good citizen, would consist in, according to this concept of *paideia*, in making those educated by sophists doctors of the soul, or good speakers. He would be such a doctor, who being familiar with the first principle of the all things propagated by Protagoras, and, in consequence, knowing that no thing possesses its proper essence by nature, would be able to instill in his listeners good opinions, the supposed truth, instead of bad opinions.<sup>65</sup> Protagoras presents such an understanding of being a good citizen in the *Theaetetus*, stating: “the wise and good orators make the good, instead of the evil, seem to be right to their states. For I claim that whatever seems right and honorable to a state is really right and honorable to it, so long as it believes it to be so.”<sup>66</sup>

Keywords:

Αἴσθησις, ἀρετή, ἐπιστήμη, φαντασία, παιδεία, πολιτική ἀρετή, πολιτική τέχνη; political skill, virtue, civic virtue, perception, knowledge, education, seeming.

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<sup>64</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 167 A – B.

<sup>65</sup> See: Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 167 C.

<sup>66</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, op. cit., 167 C.



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