

Protagoras' "Great Speech" on What It Is to Be a Person (*Prt.* 320c-328d)

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It is well known that Aristotle characterized human beings as both rational and political animals. Similarly, in his great speech (320c-328d) Plato's Protagoras aims to explain human virtues in relation to city (*polis*) and rationality (*logos*). It is important to clarify Protagoras' view of human beings for our understanding of the dialogue as a whole, for Plato in this dialogue attempts to elucidate the nature of human virtue, depicting the dialectical quarrel or contest (*agon*) between this most prominent sophist and Socrates the philosopher.

In this paper I analyze the structure and the content of Protagoras' "Great Speech," focusing on the Greek dichotomy between *idiai* (private) and *demosiai* (public). First of all, I show that Protagoras, particularly in his myth, not only distinguishes humans from other animals by nature on the basis of their possession of craft (*techne*) but also makes a contrast between citizens and non-citizens who do not live in cities, taking the former to be more virtuous than the latter with respect to political art/virtue (*politike techne/arete*). Second, I point out that Protagoras regards rationality or *logos* as a kind of instrumental reason by which citizens can be politically successful in their cities. On his view, each citizen's *logos*, above all, serves to produce the common good in the city as well as their own good, without asking critically whether the good is real or apparent. Accordingly, third, it turns out that Protagoras does not make a clear distinction between *idiai* and *demosiai*, but rather mixes up private and public (or social) life, since he supposes that citizens try to obtain their own private goal in public. As we can know, his view is based on what he thinks of the practice of moral education in Athens. This is how, against a generally accepted interpretation, I conclude that Plato intends to make Protagoras' long speech consistent with itself, despite the fact that it contains some apparent contradictions. And finally, I suggest that Plato stresses the importance of the Socratic philosophical life in contrast to the Protagorean and Athenian mixture of public and private life.