

STUDYING PROFESSIONALLY:  
 PEDAGOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS AT THE  
 GRADUATE LEVEL

Paul Kameen

*When we were inside, we came upon Protagoras walking in the portico, and walking with him in a long line were [six young men including] the most eminent of Protagoras' pupils, who is studying professionally, to become a Sophist. Those who followed behind listening to their conversation seemed to be for the most part foreigners—Protagoras draws them from every city that he passes through, charming them with his voice like Orpheus, and they follow spellbound—but there were some Athenians in the band as well. As I looked at the party I was delighted to notice what special care they took never to get in front or to be in Protagoras' way. When he and those with him turned round, the listeners divided this way and that in perfect order, and executing a circular movement took their places each time in the rear. It was beautiful.*

*Protagoras 314e-315b*

**T**he choreography of this procession, as Plato renders it through the eyes of Socrates, is both balletic and burlesque, deftly depicting in one sweeping turn the range of contradictions that riddle teacher-student relationships, especially those geared toward “studying professionally.” This image of the “professor” as the solar figure—around whom many satellites carefully circulate—is strongly entrenched in the contemporary academy, reinforced by a wide array of both disciplinary and institutional forces, not to mention the broader cultural forces that serve to regulate the kinds of roles and relationships available to professors and “their” students. Protagoras is a living emblem of the multiple ambiguities that result from the confluence of these forces: through his endeavors as a teacher, is he seeking some form of multiple self-replication? imparting, for

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the sake of others, a useful and important body of knowledge? training his listeners to be better and more productive citizens? pursuing some modicum of shared truth? Is he, in other words, arrogant and egocentric? wise and helpful? earnest and responsible? curious and pure-minded? And are his "followers" (literal as well as figurative) standing aside and behind him out of deference to his authority? respect for his knowledge? fear of his power? love of his wisdom? Is Protagoras a noble leader or a domineering tyrant? Are his students sycophants or disciples? I do not ask these questions with the intention of picking the correct answers and dismissing the others. Certainly, Plato is making fun of Protagoras—as he lampoons Hippias for giving "his explanation *ex cathedra*" and Prodicus, who "has such a deep voice that there was a kind of booming noise in the room which drowned the words" (315c, 316a). Certainly, Protagoras and his audience would defend themselves if given the opportunity, as to some extent they are in the dialogue that follows this opening scene. What I want to suggest is simply how difficult it is to determine what in fact is driving a pedagogical relationship, what in fact is being given or gotten, sought or proffered, accomplished or avoided, in its playings-out.

I will focus here on some of the key transactions in this dialogue, not by way of joining the much broader ongoing debates in our discipline about the role and function of Greek philosophy/rhetoric—from the pre-Socratics to Aristotle—in composition theory and the composition classroom, but to examine in some detail the very specific pedagogical relationship in the contemporary academy that most closely resembles the one this dialogue foregrounds: the one between professor and graduate student(s). It is an especially important relationship for those of us in composition to be looking at. Our area has, after all, a very short history as a "discipline" with a claim to advanced standing in the research university, and our experience of the roles associated with such standing is often quite different from that of our colleagues in literature or creative writing. It is, in addition, a relationship we are especially well positioned to examine. Our area has, after all, a long history of attentiveness to the undergraduate classroom and is now very often directly responsible to and for so many of the novice teachers who are working in those classrooms. By the same token, the discourses available to us for thinking and writing about the undergraduate classroom—even those are spare and often unserviceable—are not directly transferable to the venues—seminar rooms, staff meetings, departmental committees—that predominate at the graduate level.

In the graduate arena our roles as masters and mentors, as gate-keepers and door-openers, are more intensely driven by contradictory combinations of personal and institutional desires, needs, and ambitions: of power and humility, authority and deference, knowledge and reputation. And students come to us driven by their own contradictory desires for emulation and mastery, originality

and conformity, rebellion and compliance, often choosing a program specifically for the opportunity to "work with" (and inevitably, of course, to some extent, "against") a particular professor. Whether we happen to be prominent or notorious enough to attract that sort of "following," it is in this professorial role that we construct and inform future colleagues and replacements. And that is especially so in a discipline like English, where "studying professionally" means, most often, preparing to become a professor. When we begin to see our mission in such a wider scope, it is clear that we serve, either tacitly or explicitly, as "disciplinarians" in both of the applicable senses of that word: we are called upon to share and cultivate our highly specialized modes of inquiry, but also to enforce the "rules" of the discourses, and the institutions, that allow those modes of inquiry to do the work they are expected to do.

The argument between Socrates and Protagoras dramatizes the dynamics of this work around certain key questions, questions that both precede and construct matters of technique. Shortly after the above vignette, Socrates intercedes on behalf of Hippocrates, who wants to "study professionally" with the eminent Protagoras: "he would be glad to be told what effect it will have on him" (318a). At first glance, this is a curious formulation. One might expect something like "what he will learn" or "where it will get him." But Socrates is clearly concerned with more fundamental issues than these. What effect will it have? How will he be changed? By his teacher? Specifically? And by what measures are those specific changes to be evaluated for better or worse? But I am getting ahead of myself. What strikes me is how obvious and basic a question this is for teachers to be asking first, before we design our curricula, name our courses, select our books, teach our classes. And how rarely it is asked. What effect will it have? What kind of "professionals" does "it," at whatever level of planning or execution, seem to be prefiguring, seeking to engender?

Such a question foregrounds the pedagogical transaction, rather than, for example, the "professor" or "the discipline," both of which have developed already for themselves highly over-determined senses of their capacities, their mission, and particularly their authority. Shifting the weight of authority (and responsibility) around in any classroom is something that all teachers do all the time. But even when done in a rigorously considered manner (as I think Socrates's question about effect suggests it must), such a shift is not without its complications. At the graduate level, one of those is an increase in the amount and degree not only of productive contest, but also of conflict, both in the decorum of the classroom and in the teacher-student relationship. Because such a move disrupts the customary aura of professorial eminence and genial collegiality that a number of institutional structures—some of which involve graduate students as complicitous partners—engender and support, it escalates the stakes, and the risks, of the exchange taking place. This escalation correspondingly produces a range of side

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effects as varied as the individuals affected by it: excitement, irritation, motivation, anger, frustration.

As Socrates puts it: in purchasing knowledge from an expert, "take care you don't find yourself gambling dangerously with all of you that is dearest to you" (314a). If from our highly professionalized perspective this seems an almost paranoiac hyperbole, we should remember that for Socrates "knowledge cannot be taken away in parcel. When you have paid for it you must receive it straight into the soul. You go away having learned it and are benefited or harmed accordingly" (314b). The sense of urgency that this lends to pedagogy is one that is alien to our customary notions of what kind of work we do—largely, I believe, because the entrenched conceptualizations of "teaching" in our everyday professional and institutional lives would, from Socrates's perspective, seem disturbingly vague, ill defined, devalued, at least by contrast with its highly developed academic counterpart, "research." The arguments currently raging under the umbrella of "political correctness" are evidence enough of how difficult it becomes for us as professionals when we make explicit the ways in which our work politicizes and is politicized. And for us to talk about "the soul" in such a context seems downright bizarre, bringing with it the apparent threat that our work will be ideologically co-opted by the discursive straitjacket of organized religion. But it is important, I think, for us to look beyond and work our way beyond these problems of nomenclature, to consider what application the concerns of Socrates and Protagoras may have to our own situations.

Their interest in measurement, for example, is one such point of practical contact. Like us—in our current preoccupation with a wide range of assessment strategies and devices—they are seeking a mode of measurement that will guide both valuation (from an intrinsic vantage point) and *e*-valuation (from an extrinsic vantage point) in the pedagogical enterprise. "Faced with these considerations," Socrates asks, "would people agree that our salvation would lie in the art of measurement?" (356e). Seldom is anyone's "salvation," including our own, at stake in our seminars and classrooms, and this is fortunate, given the imperfect attempts at an "art of measurement" that the contemporary university applies to teaching. We have very sophisticated measures for our accomplishments as scholars and researchers, however. Precisely that disparity—not only in complexity, but also in kind—lies at the root of the problem we might have in satisfying Socrates's question about the "effect" of what we do when we "teach." Most of us, most often, simply don't know. And don't have any good way of finding out, or, frankly, any pressure on us to come up with one. And it is not merely a matter of finding new instruments or techniques of measurement. What we need to do is think much more closely, as Plato does here through his mouthpieces, about what "effect" it is we want to find a way of measuring. As we do, I believe, we will also begin to find ways of rethinking our customary ways of distinguishing teaching from research.

The structure of any complex system is, of course, always most strained at joints like this, where contrary pairs are linked and differentiated, mutually enhancing and limiting one another, not to mention defining the means by which labors will be divided, status accorded or withheld, relative value assigned. No matter which of these two—teaching and research—is given greater weight in any particular department or institution, we have already proclaimed, by so distinguishing them, that one is not the other. And that is precisely the problem with many of the current attempts to resuscitate or reclaim something we want to call “teaching.” That is, it is by definition not “research.” This presents a considerable barrier, to get back to Plato, when it comes to thinking about “what we have for sale” at the graduate level. Almost all approaches to graduate curricula and certification are based on the assumption that we are in the business of producing research and *researchers*. Most of the roles and slots available to those who teach graduate courses are based on the premise that we have demonstrated before-the-fact expertise as researchers. At the same time, “teaching” is approached more as a craft or an art that may be enhanced (the potential for which is already possessed as a talent) by experience but that cannot really itself be taught. Or even worse, as a kind of drudgery that must be endured in order to allow us to do our real “work,” which is research. It is not, that is, a fit subject for the graduate curriculum.

One of the most significant, and still largely unexamined, effects of the gradual shift over the last thirty years from a teaching- to a research-based economy in the academy (and this is especially resistant to scrutiny at the graduate level, which was always research-based) has been a profound transformation of the dominant figurative relationship between professor and student. For example, in an academic system that defines the classroom as its primary laboratory, the product of one’s work—the equivalent of the bottom line, if you will—is going to be the student that such a classroom or a congeries of such classrooms over a period of years constitutes or shapes or produces. In such a system, one’s audience and one’s colleagues are present to one another in most of their interactions and are able to communicate with one another in relatively immediate, informal, and sustained ways. Power, prestige, and reputation are then achieved locally and by means of the pedagogical relationship. It was, of course, quite common in the 50s and 60s for colleges to promote themselves and compete with one another for prospective students, in such terms; and this same tendency found expression to some extent even at the graduate level, in the development of programs like the Master of Arts in Teaching and the Doctor of Arts, both of which were designed as alternative structures for “professional study.” This version of the mission of the university—with teaching at the center rather than the periphery—survives today in some quarters, but for the most part, and especially so for large universities, the primary laboratory for one’s “work” must be, in fact, outside the

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classroom, with the only meaningful arena for the disposition of the knowledge thus constructed being by publication for disciplinary peers. In such a system, one's primary audience—one's colleagues or "students" depending on how one looks at it—are generally absent or remote, available to one another only on a delayed basis (often with gaps of years between conception, reception, and response) and only through the highly mediated and severely "disciplined" (in both respects) matrices of specialized publishing marketplaces. Power, prestige, and reputation are, then, achieved extra-institutionally and circuitously, exclusive of the classroom. There is little incentive—and little good reason, actually—to abandon this latter set of conditions in favor of the former. What we need to begin to find are better ways to make teaching fit for research (and vice versa), reintegrating thereby our professional identities with our local arenas, back to level of the classroom and to teacher-student interactions and relationships.

Let me slow down a bit to examine some of the implications of this contrast, using the opportunity both to extend the argument I have begun and to clarify my position. I am not seeking simply to reverse the historical trend to subordinate teaching (as a "measured" credential) to research as the key index of professorial status, re-inscribing the fundamental polarity that divides them, and falling prey in the process to an un-de(re)constructed nostalgia for a social system that valorizes orality and "presence" over textuality and "absence." The seeming appropriateness of such a critique is supported by the fact that I am making my case through a discussion that appears to promote a Socratic—that is, logocentric—pedagogy. I am not calling for a simple restoration of teaching—and the professorial practices and personae concomitant with it—to its rightful throne in our disciplinary hierarchy. Nor do I want to promote the Socratic method as a regimen for classroom discussion. On the contrary, I am suggesting that the only way we will ever escape from our comfortable addiction to an even more insidious and simplistic nostalgia—one that constructs our current notions of "teaching" in terms that preclude it from the sorts of "textuality" (and critical inquiry) that poststructuralist criticism recognizes and analyzes in almost all other institutional systems—is to destabilize the binary that is at its root. That binary, which regulates more materially our day-to-day lives, as well as the much broader contours of our "careers" or our "reputations," remains, ironically, out of bounds by its very composition: teaching is not-research. Research is not-teaching. And that is that.

On the basis of what terms is this polarity maintained and enforced? One of them, of course, is "knowledge": what counts as knowledge, where and how it is to be produced, accounted for, and accorded its status. The generally accepted cliché that governs the economy of our profession—finding its expression both in the way we talk about "our work" and in how we are rewarded for it with money or prestige—is that we produce this commodity, "knowledge," through

our individual and private processes of "research," and then we share it in one form (full strength) with colleagues through publication and in another form (watered-down) with students through classroom interactions. All of this ignores the simplistic notion of "knowledge" upon which such a paradigmatic fiction depends, preventing us, for example, from systematically examining the ways in which "knowledge" is inevitably regimented by the invisible matrices of disciplinary media (especially academic journals and presses) and professional forums (including, often, quite informal social networks). That we aren't attentive enough to this critique has, I think, less to do with our arrogance or myopia than with the manner in which what counts as "knowledge" in the university—especially so at the graduate level where concepts of "specialization" and "expertise" control its propagation—has been scrubbed clean of its "value(s)" (in its ethical, moral, or political senses rather than, for example, its economic sense—though, ironically, Socrates keeps using marketplace metaphors to flesh out his position) by so many kinds of commodification.

We might pursue part of this critique by talking more about the hegemony of the "article," with all of its attendant characteristics and constraints, by looking at and for the alternative forms and voices that are thereby excluded or marginalized. Or we might initiate a debate about where we are, or should be, drawing the line between "knowledge" and "not-knowledge." The most simplistic way of reading our current professional strategies is to say that any "work" that finds its terminus in a juried publication is, by definition, constitutive of "knowledge," while anything else that we write or, more to the point, that happens in a classroom, is not. We have all experienced occasions when the pedagogical transaction produces (rather than simply transmits) knowledge, both for us and for our students. That experience is much more common, of course, in a small, discussion-based seminar than in a large lecture hall. But even that latter, perhaps, could be a site for producing "knowledge" if we look at it from the right angle or think about the prospects of such a setting in the right way. We have no way of knowing, mostly because we are not encouraged—by the way the teaching/research binary is posed for us—to look for such a possibility.

There are several open sites where such work can begin in earnest. The ongoing argument among compositionists about the role of personal/experiential (or generally narrative) discursive systems for codifying and criticizing "our work" is one of them, to the extent at least that it offers opportunities to write in new and potentially productive ways about teaching. Broader disciplinary discussions under the aegis of terms like "genre" or "literacy" or "community" might also be generative, particularly if the critical discourses associated with those terms can be turned toward the venues and vehicles we habitually use to produce and share our work professionally. The increasing interest among rhetoricians in Socratic and, especially, in pre-Socratic methodologies and epistemologies offers

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another opportunity, at least in the extent to which such systems are construed as intrinsically pedagogical and therefore applicable not only to scholarly debates and problems but also to classroom practices. More generally, if we begin with the presumption that the primary import of our research-generated "knowledge" is to influence others, to change the way people or systems function or behave, to have an "effect," then there are clearly ways in which teaching—an activity that puts most of us in sustained intellectual contact with well over a hundred students every year—might also be seen as profoundly productive of certain kinds of "influence," of certain kinds of "change," of certain kinds of "effects," at least as much so as the small-circulation-journal article might. The sort of "influence" that we wield in the classroom is demeaned in precisely inverse proportion to the degree to which we exaggerate the "influence" the average university professor wields through "publication." These may be unpleasant issues for us to face, both personally and professionally, but any meaningful examination of the currency that drives the economy of our profession must sooner or later attend to them.

Another significant term by which the distinction between teaching and research is enforced is an extraordinarily (for us) naïve notion of textuality. Again, the cliché seems to presume that research is textual and teaching is not. Our scholarly oeuvre is static and portable—and therefore eligible for certain kinds of measurement, both quantitative and qualitative—in ways that our pedagogical work is not, and it lends itself to institutional efficiencies in ways that our teaching does not. But to presume that the classroom and the figurative roles that we and our students occupy and play out there are either pre- or post-textual constructions, or, even worse, not textual at all, is to fall into obvious contradiction with our current critical biases, a contradiction that happens at the moment to allow us to under(deter)mine "teaching" as we construct the preferred versions of "our work," as well as to deploy unselfconsciously an array of pedagogical practices that are directly contrary to our "professed" critical positions.

It is important for us to recognize and take full advantage of the textuality of the classroom and what we do there, to see that site as eligible for, even demanding of, our most careful, sophisticated, complex, critical scrutiny, not unlike all of the other cultural "texts" we have generally made it our business to write about over the last twenty years or so. In this process—that is, as we flesh out discursive systems for sharing our "work" on teaching through the customary "outside" professional networks (conferences, journals, newsletters)—we will necessarily be drawn simultaneously more and more "inside," into our own local settings, where we can inquire with some rigor about our own students, the textbooks we are ordering for them to buy, about our collegial relationships, or lack of them, in our department, across disciplines, about our curricula, the administrative personnel and structures that circumscribe their possibilities—and drawn to all of this in a much richer and more provocative way than we can ever be as long as

the teaching/research binary remains uncharted and unchallenged. Such a shift in our angle of vision would open up a new arena for critical scrutiny and potential publication, as well as foster a more self-conscious reference to classroom-specific issues in our other modes of research, an especially crucial matter in a discipline such as ours, which has so few extra-academic outlets. And we will simultaneously be drawn to examine potentially fruitful analogies or differences between the sort of teaching we do in our classrooms and the sort we do through juried publication. The real promise of poststructuralism cannot be fulfilled until we give it a full turn toward this multitude of micro-settings, making legible to ourselves and to our absent colleagues the significance not only of their commonalities, but more importantly of their differences. Only then can we begin to get some purchase on what we want to be our version of the question "What effect will it have?"

What I am proposing is not going to happen easily or any time soon, but there are ways in which we can begin to think about this matter on a fundamental level. One of them is through the concept of change as it applies to the pedagogical contract, a theme that in one guise or another animates much of the discussion between Socrates and Protagoras. There is, for example, the concern with knowing rather than knowledge that follows almost immediately on Protagoras's first vacuous answer to Socrates's question about "effect," an answer in which he lays claim merely to the cliché of continual betterment. Socrates then follows up, simply, "toward what . . . and better at what?" (318d). Inevitably, then, the conversation turns to matters of value, specifically the issue of whether "virtue"—first in its political and later also in its broader moral sense—can or cannot be taught. The answer to that conundrum is, in large measure, beside the point, if not to them, then at least to me. What interests me is that they are willing to pose such a question and talk about it. And generally we are not. I don't mean the old bromides about producing better citizens or more decent people, both of which seem to me to be blind alleys for us in ways that they may not have been for Plato's Athens. But more simply and narrowly, what is the "good" toward which our pedagogical activities are driven or directed—by whom, "toward what . . . and . . . at what?"

Again, the issue is not what is being *exchanged* in the transaction, but how the parties are being changed by it, actively, over time, by some process of interaction. It is not so much a matter of a teacher's having arrived at a position of authority or expertise, of *being* knowledgeable, acquiring thereby the right and the rituals to determine when a student has done so, but where each of these parties is heading in their institutionally constructed relationship, how they are respectively, and mutually, *becoming* knowledgeable. Are "to become" and "to be" the same or different? Protagoras says they are the same; Socrates says they are different. Their disagreement—simultaneously an arcane demonstration and a

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spoof of literary criticism—turns on whether the statement “Hard is it . . . to become / a good man truly” is fundamentally like or different from the statement “To be noble . . . / Is hard” (339b–c). The distinction Socrates has in mind is, in fact, central both to his critique of Protagoras and to his implicit theory of education: a conception of knowledge that is based on the economy of “being” will, in effect, exile the process of coming-to-know from the classroom, where teacher and student are present to and engaged with one another. The teacher will have achieved expertise beforehand, usually through hard, private labors, and will then display that expertise—usually in the form of a lecture, an extended disquisition, or questions with prefigured answers. And students will usually use their time in class to take note(s) of what is being said and to display, through various testing devices, or written work, the degree to which they have come to “know” the proffered material, again through largely private labors.

The key word here, on both sides of the transaction, is *display*. Just before their discussion of being/becoming, Socrates and Protagoras have a testy exchange about the ground rules of their dialogue. After a particularly long “answer” to one of Socrates’s questions, the following exchange takes place:

I’m a forgetful sort of man, Protagoras. . . . [C]ut down your answers and make them shorter if I am to follow.

What do you mean by “make my answers short”? Am I to make them shorter than the subject demands?

Of course not.

As long as is necessary then?

Yes.

As long a reply as I think necessary, or *you*?

What they told me, I answered, is that you have the gift both of speaking yourself and of teaching others to speak, just as you prefer—either at length, so that you never run dry, or so shortly that no one could beat you for brevity. If then you are going to talk to me, please use the second method and be brief. (334d–e)

After several unsuccessful attempts by both parties and other listeners to resolve the dispute, Socrates proposes a reversal of their roles: that is, Protagoras will ask the questions, and Socrates will answer. In the course of all of this, the issue of teaching—Protagoras’s worthiness to become mentor to Hippocrates—is never directly addressed. Yet both parties enact for him and for their larger audience, then dispute about the two primary discursive relationships available to teacher and student when they interact: one speaks, the other listens, resulting in a series of “long speeches”; or one asks, the other responds, initiating a discussion.

The former model, whether it is the teacher or student speaking or listening, enacts a pedagogy of display. Usually, the speaker is constructed as “full” of knowledge that is being deposited in the “empty” vessel of the listener (as, for example, in Paulo Freire’s “banking” metaphor). The latter enacts a pedagogy of construction in which knowledge has the prospect for being constituted mutually

in the process of the interaction rather than in seclusion beforehand or afterward. This may seem an almost embarrassingly superficial observation. Everyone knows the difference between lecture- and discussion-based pedagogies. Or do we? As I try to piece together and learn something from this section of the dialogue, I am led to think that, for Socrates at least, the latter is going to be a legitimate alternative to the former only if it respects the distinction between being and becoming—only, that is, if it acknowledges and allows for the hard work of coming to know to take place in the classroom, both parties equally engaged, equally at risk, equally authorized. Not all Q and A methods do that, of course. In Socrates's view, the poem they are discussing argues that "to be a good man—continuing good—is not possible, but a man may *become* good" (345c). Likewise I am suggesting by analogy that to "know"—in some static and permanent way—is not possible, but one may come-to-know. Thus, a pedagogy premised on the fixity of authorized bodies of knowledge will differ in much more than technique from one premised on the communal activity of coming to know, a difference that will show itself precisely at the joints of "at what" and "toward what" that Socrates starts this all off with. And if teaching/research is to be fundamentally reconstituted in our professional lives, we will need to find ways of examining, and communicating about, in juried disciplinary forums, the intricacies of differences such as these. We simply don't yet have such sophisticated, discipline-specific (rather than generic) discourses for talking about what it is that we as professors do for at least half of our living: teach.

I have no prospect of developing such a discourse here, or even I suppose in my whole lifetime. A project of that sort must itself be a communal one, driven by individual passions and desires, but also initiated and sustained by larger forces: economic, institutional, disciplinary. What I can offer are two "snapshots" from the conclusion of the dialogue in question, which moves through its climax this way:

To remind you [the "common man," whom Socrates introduces earlier as an additional foil for his inquiry] of your question, it arose because we two [himself and Protagoras] agreed that there was nothing more powerful than knowledge, but that wherever it is found it always has the mastery over pleasure and everything else. You on the other hand, who maintain that pleasure often masters even the man who knows, asked us to say what this experience really is, if it is not being mastered by pleasure. If we had answered you straight off that it is ignorance, you would have laughed at us, but if you laugh at us now, you will be laughing at yourselves as well, for you have agreed that when people make a wrong choice of pleasures and pains—that is, of good and evil—the cause of their mistake is lack of knowledge. We can go further, and call it, as you have already agreed, a science of measurement, and you know yourselves that a wrong action which is done without knowledge is done in ignorance. So that is what being mastered by pleasure really is—ignorance, and most serious ignorance, the fault which Protagoras, Prodicus, and Hippias profess to cure. (357c–e)

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From this point on, the dominoes topple: "To 'act beneath yourself' is the result of pure ignorance; to 'be your own master' is wisdom. . . . [I]gnorance of what is and is not to be feared must be cowardice. . . . [K]nowledge of what is and is not to be feared is courage" (358c, 360c, d).

This brings the argument full circle: both Socrates and Protagoras are being forced to change their initial positions on whether virtue can be taught, an irony Socrates takes delight in:

It seems to me that the present outcome of our talk is pointing at us, like a human adversary, the finger of accusation and scorn. If it had a voice it would say, "What an absurd pair you are, Socrates and Protagoras. One of you, having said at the beginning that virtue is not teachable, now is bent upon contradicting himself by trying to demonstrate that everything is knowledge—justice, temperance, and courage alike—which is the best way to prove that virtue *is* teachable. If virtue were something other than knowledge, as Protagoras tried to prove, obviously it could not be taught. But if it turns out to be, as a single whole, knowledge—which is what you are urging, Socrates—then it will be most surprising if it cannot be taught. Protagoras on the other hand, who at the beginning supposed it to be teachable, now on the contrary seems to be bent on showing that it is almost anything rather than knowledge, and this would make it least likely to be teachable." (361a-c)

What strikes me in this series of moves is not so much the reversal of positions—and the fitting puzzlement it leaves us with about the teachability of virtue—interesting as all that might be, but that as Socrates and Protagoras talk about teaching, they are comfortable using words that we would ourselves find awkward, maybe even embarrassing, to use in our own collegial discussions of teaching—words like "courage" and "cowardice," for example—as well as words that have become so overwrought with nostalgic connotations that they are stripped of any current pedagogical significance—concepts like "wisdom" and "ignorance," for example. These various terms have both meaning and moment, though, in this conversation. Words of comparable consequence—words that will allow us to talk simply and directly among ourselves about matters of value, of "what effect it will have," about whatever it is that we want to call our equivalent of "virtue"—need to find a way back into our own conversations about what we do when we "teach."

I don't mean to propose that finding an answer to the question of "virtue's place" in education is what we need to get about doing in order to restore the status of teaching in our professional lives. The concept of teacherly research that I have in mind would find its realization more in the conversation itself, a conversation in which the everyday desires and needs of teachers and students get addressed, haggled over, as fully and richly, in as polemical and particular terms as they are here in the dialogue between Socrates and Protagoras. If in the process we can be, by turns, as eloquent, as comical, as fastidious, as earnest, as persnick-

ety, as wise, as noble, as ridiculous as these figures are in the hands of Plato, we will have gone a long way toward developing the sort of "discourse" that any contemporary field requires if it is to serve appropriately those who come to it, with the enthusiasm of Hippocrates, to "study professionally."

WORK CITED

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