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Grammata #3

Protagoras reluctantly continues his conversation with Socrates after they had reached an impasse regarding their styles of discussion. Protagoras wanted the “upper hand” to the question-and-answer discussion, so he asked Socrates to deal with the potential inconsistency in Simonides’ poem knowing it would stump him. Protagoras was positive on the validity of his prepared analysis and did not expect a rebuttal from Socrates. This was, in reality, a stunt to gain attention from the crowd (339d10).

At first, Socrates struggled to form a rebuttal, so he turned to Prodicus to buy time (339e4). However, Socrates only went about this route of action because he knew Protagoras’s interpretation of Simonides’s poem was inaccurate and untrue to Simonides’s true intentions. Socrates is able to quickly analyze and form a rebuttal after a few exchanges with Prodicus. This ability shows a great deal of separation between Protagoras and Socrates. More specifically, this exemplifies Socrates’s skill as a thinker and discussor of wisdom while Protagoras regurgitates “lectures” that he has prepared.

The Simonides exchange has all to do with Socrates’s incredible ability to discuss and then form elaborate thoughts of his own; unlike Protagoras. Both Socrates’s analysis of the nature of courage and the technique of measurement further exemplifies these abilities. He separates courage and confidence and creates a technique to measure pleasure.

Socrates concludes the discussion with Socrates stating that no conclusion has been reached regarding whether or not virtue can be taught. Protagoras claims that he is not a bad man which indicates an admittance of not knowing the form of virtue (361e1). However, even though he does not know virtue, Protagoras still claims he is virtuous; therefore, virtue, like Socrates claims, is not a form of knowledge. This conclusion only highlights Socrates’s claim even though he says that the discussion was a failure.