

Anonymus Iamblichi, *On Excellence* (*Peri Aretēs*)

A Lost Defense of Democracy

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1. Introduction

Scholars of ancient philosophy are confounded by few greater challenges than assigning an author to an authorless text; this is surely the case with the text commonly known as the Anonymus Iamblichi (or, the “anonymous text derived from Iamblichus”).¹ In 1889, the German philologist Friedrich Blass isolated a section of chapter 20 from Iamblichus’ *Exhortation to Philosophy*² (mid-third century CE) as an extract from a lost sophistic work from the fifth century BCE; some twenty years before, Bywater had discovered that large sections of Iamblichus’ *Exhortation* were constituted of extensive quotations of classical Greek authors, including Aristotle’s own lost *Exhortation*, and Blass extended Bywater’s theory by hypothesizing that the twentieth chapter of his work had the appearance of a continuous treatise.³ Blass believed that Iamblichus had preserved portions of Antiphon’s lost *On Concord* (*Περὶ ὁμονοίας*), a hypothesis that is now no longer accepted by anyone (to my knowledge), although the more formal point concerning authorship remained, and various scholars have taken a stab at authenticating the textual extracts as the work of Antisthenes (K. Joël),⁴ Critias (Wilamowitz-Möllendorff),⁵ Protagoras (Töpfer),⁶ Hippias (Gomperz and Untersteiner),⁷ or Democritus (Cataudella

¹ Recent editions with complete translation of Anonymus Iamblichi include: (English) A. Laks and G. W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy IX: Sophists, Part 2* [Sophists], Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 140–63; D. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*, Part II (Cambridge, 2010), 863–76; (Italian) A. Ciriaci, *L’Anonimo di Giamblico: Saggio critico e analisi dei frammenti* [L’Anonimo] (Naples, 2011); M. Mari, in D. Musti and M. Mari, *Anonimo di Giamblico, La pace e il benessere: Idee sull’ economia, la società, la morale* [Anonimo] (Milan, 2003). The edition of Iamblichus’ *Protrepticus* by E. des Places, *Jamblique: Protreptique* (Paris, 1989) provides a translation into French, as does the edition of F. Romano, *Giamblico: Summa Pitagorica* (Milan, 2006), into Italian. Also worthy of mention are the translations of the fragments into English (without Greek text) by J. Dillon and T. Gergel, eds., *The Greek Sophists* [Sophists] (London, 2003), 310–8; and by M. Gagarin and P. Woodruff, *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists* (Cambridge, 1995), 290–5.

² The text is entitled *Προτρεπτικός ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν*, which I translate *Exhortation to Philosophy* (or *Exhortation*, for short). It is commonly referred to in the scholarly literature by its Latin name, *Protrepticus*.

³ See F. Blass, *De Antiphonte sophista Iamblichi auctore* (Kiel, 1889). H. Pistelli had only recently published his 1888 edition of Iamblichus’ *Protrepticus*, *Iamblichi Protrepticus ad fidem codicis Florentini* (Leipzig, 1888).

⁴ K. Joël, “Die scheinbaren Antiphonfragmente bei Iamblichos,” in *Der echte und der Xenophontische Sokrates*, 3 volumes (Berlin, 1893–1901), in Vol. 2.2 (1901), 673–704.

⁵ U. von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen*, 2 volumes (Berlin, 1893), in vol. 1, 174 n. 77.

⁶ K. Töpfer, *Zu der Frage über die Autorschaft des 20. Kap. des Iamblichischen Protreptikos* (Gmunden, 1907).

⁷ H. Gomperz, *Sophistik und Rhetorik: Das Bildungsideal des εὖ λέγειν in seinem Verhältnis zur Philosophie des V. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1912), 12; M. Untersteiner, “Un nuovo frammento dell’ Anonymus Iamblichi:

and Cole).⁸ Most scholars working on the text today, including the most recent editors of the text, plead skepticism on the issue of authorship; and although I will seek to follow Cataudella and others in pursuing, in particular, the fruits of comparison with the ethical fragments associated with the Democritean corpus, I will refrain from making any firm claims about historical authorship of the text.⁹ At all events, scholars since Blass have generally agreed on two points: (a) chapter 20 of Iamblichus' *Exhortation* does indeed preserve a more-or-less continuous treatise that dates to the classical period; and (b) this extract dates to around 400 BCE—an exception being Domenico Musti and Manuela Mari, who would date it instead to the mid-fourth century BCE.¹⁰ For our purposes it suffices to say that the text was composed at the end of the fifth century BCE in the vicinity of the Socratics—including Plato and Xenophon—and the Sophists, and that its arguments resonate in various ways with the figures listed earlier, and especially with the ethical fragments ascribed to Democritus (along with pseudo-Archytas, whose *On Law and Justice* is seldom brought to bear on the text of Anonymus Iamblichus; it is discussed elsewhere in this volume).¹¹

The text of Anonymus Iamblichus, which I will call *On Excellence* (Περὶ ἀρετῆς) for reasons that I will shortly present, is rightly included in this volume on early Greek ethics. Owing to its obscurity especially in the anglophone world, in terms of scholarship relating to pre-Platonic philosophy and to ancient political theory,¹² I will introduce *On Excellence* by appeal to its two main contexts (source preservation and original historical composition), translate and discuss all eight surviving fragments in their entirety, and provide some closing remarks about its importance to this history of democratic thought. The text itself is notable for its presentation of a series of very carefully interwoven arguments concerning the three “parts” of excellence (ἀρετή)—wisdom, courage, and eloquence—and their successful application in society. In the course of presenting this case, Anonymus Iamblichus comments on the conditions under which one should learn to be excellent (fragments 1–2) and the ends to which one should direct one's excellence (fragments 3–4); he provides an anthropological discussion of the weaknesses of human psychology and its effects on the good man (fragments 5–6) and a hypothetical thought experiment concerning the “Superman” (which naturally solicits comparison with Nietzsche's *Übermensch*) and his inability to overcome the multitude in a lawless state (fragments 6

Identificazione dell' Anonimo con Ippia,” in *Scritti minori: Studi di letteratura e filosofia greca* (Brescia, 1971), 422–39.

⁸ Q. Cataudella, “L'Anonymus Iamblichus e Democrito,” *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 10 (1932), 5–22 and “Chi è l'Anonimo di Giamblico?” *Revue des Études Grecques* 63 (1950), 74–106. A. T. Cole, Jr., “The Anonymus Iamblichus and His Place in Greek Political Theory,” *HSCP* 65 (1961), 127–63.

⁹ Much of what I will argue corresponds to the conclusions of M. R. Johnson in his own contribution to this volume on Democritus (chapter 11).

¹⁰ For an excellent analysis of the history of the text, its reception, and its authorship, see Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 29–51.

¹¹ In Chapter 20. Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 24, mentions pseudo-Archytas' *On Wisdom*, which is also quoted extensively by Iamblichus in the *Exhortation*, but does not draw any further connections.

¹² A few examples of major works (by scholars whom I rate highly) on ancient ethics, politics, and philosophy that do not mention Anonymus Iamblichus: the contributions to R. Balot, *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Malden, MA, 2013); P. Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice* (Cambridge, 2009); the contributions to C. Rowe and M. Schofield, *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2002); G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, second edition (Cambridge, 1983).

and 8); and he offers a positive defense of law and justice, reflecting a pro-democratic philosophical perspective (fragments 7–8)—a *rara avis* indeed in ancient philosophy. Prior to translation and analysis of these arguments, I want to discuss briefly its most important contexts: its local preservation within Iamblichus’ *Exhortation*, and the probable context of the text’s production in late fifth- to mid-fourth-century BCE Greece.

2. Context of Preservation: Iamblichus’ *Exhortation*
to *Philosophy* (c.300 CE)

An analysis of the overall structure and themes of Iamblichus’ *Exhortation* helps us to understand how the preservation of Anonymus Iamblichi is conditioned by Iamblichus’ project of composing an exhortation to Pythagorean philosophy.¹³ The general structure of Iamblichus’ *Exhortation* is preserved in a table of contents, which aids in our investigation when placed alongside the order of passages quoted by Iamblichus:

Chapter (pp. in Pistelli’s ed.)	Topic	Author, Work Quoted/ Extracted
Ch. 1. (pp. 6.12–8.9)	Introduction + universality and tripartite division of Pythagorean philosophy	—
Ch. 2. (pp. 8.10–10.13)	Generally accepted precepts that support exhortation to Pythagorean philosophy	—
Ch. 3. (pp. 10.14–16.10) Ch. 4. (pp. 16.11–24.13)	Pythagorean precepts in verse Scientific approaches which support exhortation to theoretical philosophy	Pythagoras , <i>Golden Verses</i> [ps-]Archytas , <i>On Wisdom</i> ¹⁴
Ch. 5. (pp. 24.14–36.26)	Pythagorean exhortations that improve those of other philosophical schools	Plato , <i>Euthydemus</i> , <i>Clitophon</i> , <i>Alcibiades I</i> , <i>Laws</i> , <i>Timaeus</i> , <i>Republic</i> ; Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i> ¹⁵
Ch. 6. (pp. 36.27–41.5)	“Mixed” exhortations to political and theoretical virtues	Plato , <i>Laws</i> , Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i>
Ch. 7. (pp. 41.6–45.3)	Particular invitations to theoretical philosophy from human nature/ experience	Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i>

¹³ Iamblichus’ *Exhortation* was the second book in Iamblichus’ *Compendium of Pythagorean Doctrines* (or, an alternate title, *On Pythagoreanism*), after his *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, which survives. A comprehensive discussion of the structure and project of this set of treatises is D. J. O’Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1989), 30–44. The most important recent work on Iamblichus’ methodology of quotation and citation is D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson, “Authenticating Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005), 193–294. In this section, I adopt a similar approach to the quotation of Anonymus Iamblichi in Iamblichus’ *Exhortation* as I did with ps-Archytas’ *On Wisdom*, in P. S. Horky, “Pseudo-Archytas’ *Protreptics*? *On Wisdom* in its Contexts” [“Ps-Archytas”], in D. Nails and H. Tarrant, *Second Sailing: Alternative Perspectives on Plato* (Helsinki, 2015), 21–39.

¹⁴ The text is probably the same as *On Wisdom* of ps-Perictione, but Iamblichus cites Archytas of Tarentum as the author here. See Horky, “Ps-Archytas,” 33–4.

¹⁵ Or, possibly, Porphyry (compare *Abst.* I.33.3–4).

Ch. 8. (pp. 45.4–48.25)	Reminders that arise out of common notions that philosophy takes precedence over other desirables	Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i>
Ch. 9. (pp. 49.1–54.9)	Approach to the protreptic that arises out of nature's desire according to Pythagoras' response to the citizens of Phlius	Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i>
Ch. 10. (pp. 54.10–56.12)	Proof that theoretical philosophy presents practical advantages for daily life . . .	Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i>
Ch. 11. (pp. 56.13–59.18)	and that joy excels for those who choose the intellectual life	Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i>
Ch. 12. (pp. 59.19–61.4)	Approach to exhortation from the fact that philosophy leads to complete happiness	Aristotle , <i>Protrepticus</i> or another dialogue (?)
Ch. 13. (pp. 61.5–72.8)	Approaches to exhortation according to the Pythagorean hypotheses and true opinions concerning the soul	Plato , <i>Phaedo</i> , <i>Menexenus</i> , <i>Apology</i>
Ch. 14. (pp. 72.9–77.28)	Impulses to exhortation from the philosophical life	Plato , <i>Theaetetus</i>
Ch. 15. (pp. 78.1–82.9)	Exhortation concerning education and ignorance	Plato , <i>Republic</i>
Ch. 16. (pp. 82.10–83.28)	Other approaches concerning education and its fruits	Plato , <i>Republic</i>
Ch. 17. (pp. 84.1–85.28)	Suggestions arising out of ancient precepts and myths that exhort the temperate, balanced, well-organized life	Plato , <i>Gorgias</i>
Ch. 18. (pp. 86.1–88.4)	Exhortation according to the proper arrangement of the body	Plato , <i>Gorgias</i>
Ch. 19. (pp. 88.5–93.25)	Approach to exhortation from the goods of the soul	Plato , <i>Gorgias</i> , <i>Menexenus</i> , <i>Laws</i>
Ch. 20. (pp. 93.26–104.25)	Counsels “mixed” with exhortations that extend to all goods and parts of philosophy ¹⁶	*Anonymus Iamblichus
Ch. 21. (pp. 104.26–126.6)	The “symbolic” exhortation, explanation of the Pythagorean symbols	Pythagoras , <i>Symbola</i>

My purpose in drawing up this schema is to illustrate how Iamblichus' arrangement of his *Exhortation* works on at least three levels: first, at the thematic level, there is a somewhat haphazard argumentative progression from the more universal to the more particular, from the theoretical to the practical and political, from the soul to the body¹⁷—and back again; second, at the level of quotation, there is a ring-composition, with a progression of Pythagoras (chapter 3)—Archytas (chapter 4)—Plato (chapters 5–6)¹⁸—Aristotle (chapters 5–12)—Plato (chapters 13–19)—Anonymus Iamblichus (chapter 20)—Pythagoras (chapter 21);¹⁹ and finally, there is a near ring-composition of medium, gnomic verse

¹⁶ Specifically, the summary of chapter 20 reads: “Counsels mixed with exhortations in common (μεμυγμέναι ὑποθήκαι προτροπαῖς κοινῇ) that extend to all the goods, and to all the parts of philosophy, and the ends of life, at which virtue aims.”

¹⁷ Compare Iamblichus' treatment of justice (Περὶ δικαιοσύνης) (Iamb. VP 167–8, pp. 94.13–95.10 Deubner-Klein).

¹⁸ There is apparently an overlap in chapters 5–6 between Aristotle and Plato, although, to be sure, the Aristotle “quotations” are not guaranteed.

¹⁹ I owe this observation to Monte Ransome Johnson, who, in an inspired conversation in 2009, deduced from this evidence that the Anonymus Iamblichus could be Archytas of Tarentum. There are several reasons, however, to exclude this possibility: first, in chapter 3, Iamblichus cites Archytas by name, but he does not refer the extract of Anonymus Iamblichus to any author; and second, the text is in Attic, with some Ionicisms, rather than Doric

(Pythagoras)—prose treatise (Archytas)—dialogue (Plato, Aristotle, Plato)—prose treatise (Anonymus Iamblichi)—gnomic *sententiae* (Pythagoras). Hence, at the ends of the work are Pythagoras' *Golden Verses* and *Symbols*; Aristotle's dialogue (mostly, but perhaps not only, his own lost *Exhortation*) fittingly occupies the middle, with Plato's dialogues flanking Aristotle's in close proximity; and Archytas and Anonymus Iamblichi, writing in prose, are closer to Pythagoras' wisdom statements on either end.

The placement of Anonymus Iamblichi in this structure would encourage us to consider how it could be possible that Iamblichus considered this author at some level "Pythagorean"—or at least how his ideas dovetail with (what Iamblichus took to be) Pythagorean ethical commitments. Speaking about the organization of his *Exhortation* in the introduction, Iamblichus describes the section prior to Pythagoras' symbols (i.e., the section in which he quotes Anonymus Iamblichi's text) in these terms:

After this, one should employ a certain middle approach, neither entirely popular nor Pythagorean in a strict sense (οὔτε παντάπασι δημῶδει οὔτε μὴν ἀντικρυς Πυθαγορικῇ), nor completely alienated from each of these two modes either. In this way, we will arrange the common encouragements to all philosophy, so that they are kept separate from the Pythagorean intention... (Iamb. *Protr.* 1, p. 7.18–23 Pistelli)²⁰

Whatever Iamblichus really means here by the "common encouragements," it is clear that the section of his *Exhortation* that quotes Anonymus Iamblichi preserves a "middle" or "mixed" type of exhortation, once that is neither "entirely popular" (παντάπασι δημῶδει) nor "strictly Pythagorean" (ἀντικρυς Πυθαγορικῇ).²¹ We should pause on this final phrase, because it is liable to confuse us: does Iamblichus mean that the text of Anonymus Iamblichi is not Pythagorean *in any way*, or simply not Pythagorean *in the strongest sense*? What does Iamblichus mean when he speaks of a person, or a mode of exhortation, as "Pythagorean, strictly speaking" (ἀντικρυς Πυθαγορικῇ)?

It is clear that, by "Pythagorean, strictly speaking," Iamblichus means *truly* Pythagorean, in the sense of presenting *esoteric* doctrines that are contrasted with the *exoteric*, or "popular," expressions of philosophy, accessible to everyone.²² For Iamblichus, esoteric Pythagoreans were those who heard Pythagoras himself, the so-called "acousmatics," whereas exoteric Pythagoreans were those who knew Pythagoreanism through second-hand sources only and remained outside the close circle of Pythagoras' followers, the so-called "mathematicians."²³ Hence, the text of Anonymus Iamblichi would appear to

(which all the texts of Archytas and ps-Archytas adopt). A more plausible scenario, to be investigated later in this chapter, is that Iamblichus included the extract at this point because he believed its author to be a Pythagorean, or at least to reflect ideas that communicate the "middle" or "mixed" approach to exhortation to philosophy, just as the *On Wisdom* of ps-Archytas does.

²⁰ For translations of Iamblichus' *Exhortation to Philosophy*, I benefit from the yet unpublished draft of D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson.

²¹ This phrase is all but ignored in modern discussions of Anonymus Iamblichi. It is mentioned by Musti, *Anonimo*, 65, although its implications are not explored. It is not clear that, for Iamblichus' purposes, there is any difference between "mixed" and "middle" approaches to exhortation.

²² On the differences between symbolic and "popular" (δημῶδει) modes of philosophical expression, see Iamb. *VP* 103–5, pp. 59.17–61.12 Deubner-Klein.

²³ See Iamb. *Protr.* 21, pp. 104.26–105.18 Pistelli; *VP* 81, pp. 46.26–47.3 Deubner-Klein; 86–9, pp. 50.6–52.19 Deubner-Klein; *Comm. math.* 25, pp. 76.16–78.8 Festa-Klein. On further differences between esoteric and exoteric Pythagoreans, including political divisions along aristocratic versus democratic lines, see P. S. Horky, *Plato and Pythagoreanism [Plato]* (Oxford, 2013), 7–35 and 85–124.

constitute—at least in the eyes of Iamblichus—a *middle* mode of philosophical expression that blends esoteric and exoteric strands of Pythagoreanism, without being fully reducible to either. The ring-composition mentioned earlier, which ostensibly pairs pseudo-Archytas' *On Wisdom* with *On Excellence* of Anonymus Iamblichi, would encourage us to reflect upon the similarities between these works. It is clear that Iamblichus considered the works ascribed to Archytas of Tarentum, including *On Wisdom* (which Iamblichus of course thought to be genuine), as reflecting the “mixed” mode of exhortation: he claims as much in an analysis of a passage from that text, on the grounds that it “has blended the common nature with the particular nature, so that they possess harmony in relation to one another.”²⁴ For Iamblichus, the common or universal nature is what is more divine, and the particular or individual nature is what is more human; hence, both ps-Archytas and Anonymus Iamblichi are taken to reflect the mixed or middle mode of exhortation, which aims to demonstrate how the gods and humans are conjoined in harmony.²⁵ This is confirmed by Iamblichus' introduction to the extracts of Anonymus Iamblichi:

Therefore, I think not unsuitable in this circumstance the exhortation through counsels, which already somehow approximates the guidance on how one should live, and what it expresses most of all is that the parts of philosophical reason are not scattered, but all continuous in relation to one another. Now according to this very procedure, we first begin from those that are most honorable, since one needs training to honor god... Furthermore, it is right to know the capacity of each of the laws and how to make use of them; but it is not possible to learn these things without knowing virtue (ἀρετή),²⁶ to which we refer both the capacity and the use of the laws, and proficiency in virtue obtains by means of philosophy, with the result that philosophy is an authority in relation to this [sc. virtue] as well. Furthermore, one should know how to associate with humans, but someone will not determine this without examining the account of what is appropriate in the case of all actions (μὴ τὸν τοῦ προσήκοντος ἀπολογισμὸν ἐπὶ πασῶν τῶν πράξεων ἐπεσκεμμένος), knowing the worthiness and the unworthiness of each human, and being capable of distinguishing the habits and the natures of each of them, and the capacities of the soul, and the arguments suited to all these things. And yet, surely none of these obtains without philosophy, and so it [sc. philosophy] would be useful for their sake. (Iamb. *Protr.* 20, pp. 93.26–94.5, 94.14–29 Pistelli)

²⁴ Iamb. *Protr.* 4, pp. 20.15–21.1 Pistelli: “[Archytas] also posits another approach, the mixed one, which exhorts to the same things in the following way: ‘For the human has been born and constituted for the purpose of contemplating the reason of the nature of the universe; and, therefore, it is the function of wisdom to <obtain> and contemplate the intelligence of the things-that-are’ [ps-Archyt., *On Wisdom* fr. 3 = p. 44.17–20 Thesleff]. Indeed, we say that what is mixed among these [words] is this: he has blended the common with the particular nature, so that they possess harmony in relation to one another. For if the reason of humankind exists in the reason of the ‘nature of the universe,’ and if the wisdom of humankind obtains and contemplates ‘the intelligence of the things-that-are,’ not only is there agreement between the portion of reason and the portion of the intelligible nature of the universe, but also the exhortation becomes more perfect.”

²⁵ See Iamb. *Protr.* 6, pp. 36.27–37.11 Pistelli.

²⁶ The standard translation for ἀρετή is “virtue,” in the specific sense of “moral or ethical excellence.” This becomes a standard understanding in ancient philosophy starting from, at the latest, Plato. But, prior to Plato, it tends to mean more generally “excellence,” whether moral or ethical or some other—a meaning that, in my opinion, ἀρετή obtains in the text of Anonymus Iamblichi. Hence, I will consistently translate ἀρετή with the more general term “excellence” in reference to Anonymus Iamblichi, but will opt for the more specific term “virtue” in reference to Plato and the Socratics, as well as all philosophers subsequent to them (including Iamblichus).

As this passage makes clear, Anonymus Iamblichi's work is taken to exemplify the continuous relations between theoretical and practical philosophy, and between the gods and humans. As Iamblichus argues, the relationship between gods and humans, and between the theoretical and practical parts of philosophy, is mediated by virtue (*ἀρετή*), which can only be attained through training in philosophy.²⁷ Iamblichus maintains that virtue is closely tied to law and the laws, but in appealing to practical philosophy, which constitutes the knowledge of how to associate with other human beings, Iamblichus lists the criteria that make up our understanding of right action towards other humans, including comprehension of their relative worth, habits, natures, psychic capacities, and the arguments that are properly suited to them.²⁸ The text of Anonymus Iamblichi is taken by Iamblichus as an exemplary model of the "middle" mode of exhortation, which recognizes the importance of virtue (*ἀρετή*) for human social interactions, and the fundamentality of philosophy for understanding the proper application of our knowledge concerning other human beings.²⁹

Now that we have a better sense of why Iamblichus includes the text of Anonymus Iamblichi, in relation to the project of exhortation to Pythagorean philosophy, we can leap backwards almost 700 years to the chronological context for the production of this text, in classical Greece, around the end of the fifth century BCE.

3. Context of Production: Social Contract Theory in the Late Fifth Century BCE (?)

In the famous second sailing of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates and Glaucon, finding the debate conducted with Thrasymachus in Book 1 unsatisfactory, set out to discuss justice anew by summarizing the opinion of a certain "countless others" (*ἀκούων... μυρίων ἄλλων*).³⁰ In so doing, they tell us something important about roughly contemporary texts like *On Excellence* of Anonymus Iamblichi, which hypothesized a social contract in the context of praising law and justice:

So now you're going to hear about the first subject I said I'd discuss, the nature and origins of justice. What they [the countless others] say is that doing injustice is naturally a good thing and being a victim of it a bad thing, but that the badness of having it done to one outweighs the goodness of doing it; so that whenever people treat each other unjustly and get a taste of what it's like both to do it and to have it done to them, those who aren't able to choose the one while avoiding the other decide that they'll gain by making a contract –

²⁷ The fragments of ps-Archytas' *On Wisdom* reveal a text chiefly concerned with expounding theoretical philosophy; it is Iamblichus, through his exegesis of that text, who seeks to make the work more pragmatic in nature. See Horky, "Ps-Archytas," 29–32.

²⁸ Compare Iamblichus' discussion of Pythagorean justice at VP 179–81, pp. 100.3–101.14 Deubner-Klein.

²⁹ For example, Iamblichus (VP 130, p. 74.4–10 Deubner-Klein) attributed to Pythagoras the discovery of "the whole of political education" (*εὐρετήν... τῆς πολιτικῆς ὅλης παιδείας*) and the claim that "nothing among [political] affairs as they are is pure [sc. unmixed]" (*μηδέν ἐλικρινές εἶναι τῶν ὄντων πραγμάτων*).

³⁰ Pl. R. 2, 358d20–1. Note that Glaucon adapts the core premise of Thrasymachus' argument (i.e., that justice is what is in the interest of the stronger, and when the stronger commit an injustice against the weaker in their own interest, this is a just act) in the presentation of the opinions of the "countless others." Hence, it is slightly misleading to refer to the social contract theory expounded by Glaucon as being "di chiara ispirazione filotrasmachea" (Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 155)—inspired by Thrasymachus, yes, within the context of the dialogue, but not beholden to it.

to ban the doing of injustice, and so being the victim of it as well. It's from there, so the story goes, that they start establishing laws, as contracts with each other, calling what is prescribed by the law "lawful" and "just" (καὶ ἐντεῦθεν δὴ ἄρξασθαι νόμους τίθεσθαι καὶ συνθήκας αὐτῶν, καὶ ὀνομάσαι τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἐπιτάγμα νόμιμόν τε καὶ δίκαιον); and that, people say, is the origin and the essence of justice (καὶ εἶναι δὴ ταύτην γένεσιν τε καὶ οὐσίαν δικαιοσύνης) – something in between (ἐν μέσῳ) what's best for us, acting unjustly and getting away with it, and what's worst of all, being the victim of injustice and being powerless to get one's own back. Being in the middle like this, between the two things, what's "just" is something a person is content to live with, not because it's good, but because it makes up for one's lack of strength to do justice; anyone who can do it, they say, and is truly a man, wouldn't ever make this contract, "not to do or to be the victim of injustice," with anybody at all – he'd be crazy to do any such thing. So this, Socrates, or something like it, is the nature of justice, as the theory goes, and this is the sort of origin it has (ἡ μὲν οὖν δὴ φύσις δικαιοσύνης . . . καὶ ἐξ ᾧν πέφυκε). (Pl. R. 2, 358e2–359b7; translated by Rowe)

Glaucon suggests that one must go through the arguments of those "countless others" before moving onto the definition of what justice really is. Scholars have long noted the significance of this passage for placing Plato's thought within the larger context of Greek political discourse about the social contract: the eminent *Republic* commentator James Adam adduces comparisons with Euripides (*Ph.* l. 509), the sophist Lycophron (DK 83 fr. 3), and both Callicles (*Grg.* 482e2–483c9) and the Athenian Stranger (*Lg.* 690b7–c3) from Plato's own works.³¹ G. B. Kerferd goes further by adding Hippias (DK 86 A14), the author of the famous *Sisyphus* fragment (Euripides or Critias? DK 88 B 25), Protagoras (as represented in the "Great Speech" of Plato's *Protagoras*, at 320c3–328d2), Democritus (DK 68 B 250 and B 255), and, in the broader context of *isonomia*, even Herodotus' constitutional debate in Persia (3.80–2) and Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides (2.37.1).³² "Countless" indeed were the "others" who provided a natural explanation of the emergence of a social contract, and it is within this larger environment of intellectual debates in this period that we should contextualize the arguments of Anonymus Iamblichus.³³

At a more specific level, the consensus view of scholars is that Anonymus Iamblichus shows the greatest affinity with the thought of Protagoras of Abdera—or at least with its Platonic portrayal.³⁴ This affinity would appear to be relatively strong, but its arguments are mostly circumstantial: the presence of Ionic terms in the Attic text implies that whoever the author was, he had knowledge of Ionian dialect, and it is likely Ionian ideas about nature were transmitted through this medium of communication.³⁵ We cannot, however,

³¹ J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, second edition with an introduction by D. A. Rees (Cambridge, 1965), Vol. 1, 68.

³² G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, 1981), 148–52.

³³ Scholars who have considered this context in relation to Anonymus Iamblichus include M. Bonazzi, *I Sofisti [Sofisti]* (Rome, 2010); 93, and C. H. Kahn, "The Origins of Social Contract Theory" ["Origins"], in G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophists and Their Legacy* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 92–108, at 98.

³⁴ This is the conclusion of Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 196: "le teorie e le argomentazioni avanzate dall' ignoto autore risultano visibilmente influenzate dal pensiero di Protagora." Cf. Bonazzi, *Sofisti*, 93; Mari, *Anonimo*, 101–3; Dillon and Gergel, *Sophists*, 310–1.

³⁵ The terms identified as descending from the Ionic dialect are: εὐλόγως, μικρός, ἀμφιβάλλω, ὀλιγοχρονίως, ἀνέκλειπτος, ἐμβασιλεύω, and ὑποδύνω. See Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 68–74.

infer on the evidence of *Plato alone* that Protagoras influenced Anonymus Iamblichus, much less that the latter was a student of Protagoras, since the exact nature of Protagoras' thought on (a) the evolution of human nature, (b) development of the social contract, and (c) law and justice as guarantors of this social contract, is embedded in Plato's playful dialogue, written sometime in the first half of the fourth century BCE. Moreover, as Charles Kahn notes, many of the concepts of relevance to the social contract are present even in Athenian tragedy, reaching back as far as Aeschylus—how much of this is Ionian philosophy channeled through Athenian eclecticism cannot be determined with confidence.³⁶ That said, there are further reasons to emphasize the connections between Protagoras of Abdera and Anonymus Iamblichus, grounded in analysis of the precious surviving snippets of the former's writings: as we will see in section 4.1, this is especially the case with fragment 1 of Anonymus Iamblichus and Protagoras' extant fragments on education. We are better, though surely still quite poorly, served by comparison with another Ionian philosopher, Democritus of Abdera, since a greater number of his ethical fragments—indeed, too many (as we will see)—survive. In particular, we will note that there are important connections between the fragments of Anonymus Iamblichus and certain ethical fragments ascribed to Democritus (or Democrates), perhaps collected under the title *Golden Sayings*, whose authenticity has been debated.³⁷ Finally, of all the figures to whom Anonymus Iamblichus has been attached, the one who has the greatest claim to have *any* Pythagorean connections—and hence to suffice for Iamblichus' "middle" or "mixed" mode of exhortation—is Democritus. Hence, it is to Democritus, the eclectic Ionian philosopher who could be claimed to have associated with Pythagoreanism (at least for Iamblichus' purposes), that we will turn for contextualization of the fragments of Anonymus Iamblichus.

4. Anonymus Iamblichus' *On Excellence* (Περὶ ἀρετῆς): A Discussion of the Fragments

4.1. Fragments 1–2: Excellence and Reputation

Now we have opportunity to turn to the eight fragments of Anonymus Iamblichus himself, in order to see how his work might suffice for Iamblichus' "mixed" or "middle" mode of exhortation to philosophy.³⁸ To begin with, Iamblichus has preserved large, uninterrupted stretches from his source text, comprising what are often apparently circumscribed arguments. This is clear from the summary comments that usually bookend the passages themselves. The fragments themselves, I will argue, demonstrate an adherence to specific paradigms found in Ionian philosophy, and especially in the fragments of the Abderites Protagoras and Democritus, as against other Sophistic writers, and show especially rich

³⁶ Kahn, "Origins," 97–105.

³⁷ For an accessible introduction to the problem of the *Golden Sayings* attributed to Democrates/Democritus, see W. K. C. Guthrie, *The History of Greek Philosophy, Volume 2: From Parmenides to Democritus* (Cambridge, 1965), 489–92. On Democritus' contributions to ethics, with a sensible analysis of the ethical fragments, see W. Leszl, "Democritus' Works: from their Titles to their Contents ["Works"]," in A. Brancacci and P.-M. Morel, *Democritus: Science, the Arts, and the Care of the Soul* (Leiden, 2007), 11–76, at 64–76.

³⁸ Diels (DK 89), followed by Dillon and Gergel, *Sophists*, Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, and Mari, *Anonimo*, established seven fragments, but Diels' seventh fragment should be broken into two fragments (see section 4.3).

correspondences with the ethical precepts attributed to Democritus.³⁹ The first fragment of Anonymus Iamblichī's treatise has the look of a programmatic opening, which lays out the main topics for analysis and discussion:

Whatever one wishes to bring to perfection in the finest terms possible – whether wisdom (σοφία), courage (ἀνδρεία), eloquence (εὐγλωσσία), or excellence (ἀρετή),⁴⁰ either as a whole or some part of it – one can achieve this in the following way. First, there is a need for natural disposition (φύνη), and while this has been gifted by fortune (τύχη), the things that are already within a human being's power (ἐπ' αὐτῷ) are these: to become eager for fine and good things (ἐπιθυμητής . . . τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν) and to appreciate hard work (φιλόπονος), learning these things as early as possible and passing one's life with them over a long time. If even one of these [goods] is absent, it is not possible to bring to the height of perfection any⁴¹ [of them]; but if one possesses all of these, whatever a human works at (ὅ τι ἂν ἀσκή) cannot be outdone (ἀνυπερβλήτων).⁴² (Anon. *Iamb.* DK 89 fragment 1 = *Iamb. Protr.* p. 95.13–24 Pistelli)

This fragment features an introductory character, and it is likely to have come at the beginning of a treatise or pamphlet. We cannot know the title of the work, but one possible suggestion presents itself from what appears to be the stated topic of the work: the height of learning is an excellence (ἀρετή)⁴³ that is whole and complete. This excellence would appear to be comprised of, or at least function as an umbrella term for, the optimized functions of wisdom (σοφία), courage (ἀνδρεία), and eloquence (εὐγλωσσία).⁴⁴ Hence, we might reasonably conjecture from the introduction that the work was originally entitled *On Excellence* (Περὶ ἀρετῆς), a title well attested throughout the fourth century BCE, especially among figures associated with the circle of Socrates.⁴⁵ Therefore, I refer to the title of this

³⁹ I should clarify that there are also some connections with intellectuals associated with the circle of Socrates, which I will mention in footnotes.

⁴⁰ As Dillon and Gergel, *Sophists*, 403, note, ἀρετή properly configured is the summation of the previous three goods. This hypothesis seems plausible to me.

⁴¹ Adopting Kaibel's οὐδὲν (with DK).

⁴² I employ the text of Diels from DK. All translations of Anonymus Iamblichī into English are my own, with help especially from Laks and Most, *Sophists*, 142–63 and Dillon and Gergel, *Sophists*, 310–318 (although I not infrequently depart from them).

⁴³ Here, we can see how Iamblichus has appropriated the concept of “excellence” to his own more Platonic concept of “virtue.”

⁴⁴ Later on, in fr. 3, Anonymus Iamblichī will also mention strength (ισχύς) alongside wisdom and eloquence—a reasonable inference is that strength there refers to courage here.

⁴⁵ *On Excellence/Virtue* (Περὶ ἀρετῆς) is a *topos* in Greek literature of the period. Among the sophists, we have evidence of Protagoras' *On Excellences* (Περὶ ἀρετῶν) (DK 80 A 1), Prodicus' *Choice of Heracles* (DK 84 B 2), described by Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (2.1.21) as being περὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς; the speech ascribed to the Mytilenian ambassadors (Th. 3.10) has a sub-theme περὶ τοῦ δικαίου καὶ ἀρετῆς (also cf. Pl. *Cri.* 53e6, for Socrates' speeches on the same topic); among the Socratics, we see a work Περὶ ἀρετῆς, as well as a *Προτρεπτικός*, ascribed to Aristippus (D.L. 2.85 = SSR IV A 144); a work Περὶ ἀρετῆς ὅτι οὐ διδασκτόν to Simon the Cobbler (D.L. 2.122 = SSR VI B 87); a work Περὶ ἀρετῆς ascribed to Diogenes of Sinope (D.L. 6.80 = SSR V B 117) and Plato's *Meno*, which was subtitled Περὶ ἀρετῆς; finally, Democritus is ascribed Περὶ ἀνδραγαθίας ἢ περὶ ἀρετῆς, a title that works very well for the contents of the treatise of Anonymus Iamblichī. A substantial portion of the surviving fragments, however, focus on why one needs to come to the defense of law and justice. Hence, alternative titles could be *On Law and Justice* (Περὶ νόμου καὶ δικαιοσύνης), a title which is attested for ps-Archytas (see this volume, p. 461); *On Law*, ascribed to Crito (if this wasn't confused with Plato's eponymous dialogue: D.L. 2.121 = SSR V B 42) and to Simon the Cobbler (D.L. 2.122 = SSR V B 87), and which is attested for two works of Antisthenes (D.L. 6.15 = SSR V A 41), the most relevant of which is Περὶ νόμου ἢ περὶ καλοῦ καὶ δικαίου; *On Justice*, which is also attested for Antisthenes (Περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας προτρεπτικός, in three books—for the fragments related to these topics, see SSR V A 63–78).

work as *On Excellence*, on the assumption that this may be the title of the work, although we cannot be absolutely sure. In fragment 1, excellence (*ἀρετή*) is described, as in other fragments of this work,⁴⁶ as the activity of bringing goods (especially, but perhaps not exclusively, wisdom, courage, and eloquence) to the height of perfection, which would appear to require not only commitment to hard work and an appreciation of what is fine and good over a long period of time, factors which are under our own control, but also the gift of a natural disposition to learning, which is conferred by fortune (*τύχη*).⁴⁷ Here, it is important to emphasize the Ionian roots of Anonymus Iamblichus's thought: natural disposition (*φύσις*) and practice (*ἄσκησις*) are prerequisites for the success guaranteed by excellence, a Protagorean concept adapted here by Anonymus Iamblichus.⁴⁸ Similarly, one of the ethical *sententiae* of Democritus (DK 68 B 242), preserved by Stobaeus, also claims that "more people become good on the basis of practice than out of their nature" (*πλέονες ἐξ ἀσκήσιος ἀγαθοὶ γίνονται ἢ ἀπὸ φύσιος*), a sentiment that is consonant with what Anonymus Iamblichus claims.⁴⁹

Outside of Protagoras and Democritus, the unique combination of natural disposition (*φύσις*) and practice (*ἄσκησις*) is not to be found anywhere else among early Greek philosophers. To my knowledge, the connection between the fragments of Protagoras himself and the arguments of Anonymus Iamblichus is unfortunately limited to this—a vivid connection, indeed, but the only one that survives.⁵⁰ On the other hand, connections between the arguments of Anonymus Iamblichus and the corpus of Democritus' writings are plentiful, and very much worth examining closely, as we will see throughout the rest of this chapter. A fragment of the Democritean corpus, preserved both in the "Democrates" collection and by Stobaeus, extends our understanding of the triad of goods in *On Excellence* by establishing a hierarchy for them:

It is orderly to submit to a law, a magistrate, a wiser man.

νόμῳ καὶ ἄρχοντι καὶ σοφωτέρῳ εἵκειν κόσμιον.

(Stob. 3.1.45 = Democritus DK 68 B 47)

One may note that the triad to which a person who is "orderly" should submit corresponds, at least loosely, to the three skills that are the parts of excellence in fragment 1 of Anonymus Iamblichus: wisdom corresponds to the wiser man, as does courage to the magistrate, and eloquence to the law.⁵¹ For Anonymus Iamblichus, the most obvious benefit

⁴⁶ See especially frr. 2–4.

⁴⁷ Hence, I do agree with Mari, *L'Anonimo*, 152–3, that wisdom, courage, and eloquence are the "parts" of excellence.

⁴⁸ DK 80 B 3 is the strongest evidence for a Protagorean connection to Anonymus Iamblichus: "Protagoras said, 'Instruction requires nature and practice' (*φύσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως διδασκαλία δεῖται*), and 'it is necessary for [humans] to learn by starting from youth' (*ἀπὸ νεότητος δὲ ἀρξαμένους δεῖ μανθάνειν*)."

⁴⁹ P.-M. Morel, "Democrite et l'objet de la philosophie naturelle. A propos des sens de *φύσις* chez Démocrite", in A. Brancacci and P.-M. Morel, *Democritus: Science, the Arts, and the Care of the Soul* (Leiden, 2007), 105–24, at p. 119, takes this *sententia* to reflect Democritus' theory of nature.

⁵⁰ Note that I am not considering the testimonia of Protagoras that derive from Plato, which do indeed show some similarities to Anonymus Iamblichus, but which cannot, in my opinion, be taken to represent Protagoras' thought in any unqualified way.

⁵¹ One might object that "courage" would more typically be associated with a soldier (instead of a magistrate), but there is nothing preventing Democritus with stating something atypical. For example, consider the Democritean *sententia* (DK 68 B 214) that states, "courageous is he who is stronger not only than enemies, but also than pleasures. Some men rule over cities but are enslaved to women" (trans. Laks and Most, *Sophists*). In

of such a comprehensive and committed training in wisdom, courage, and eloquence is the promise of success in one's efforts, a success that outstrips the actions of other people, perhaps even to their own annoyance.⁵²

As is the case with ps-Archytas' *On Wisdom*, with which Anonymus Iamblichus' *On Excellence* is paired in Iamblichus' quotation ring-composition (discussed earlier), there is an implicit focus on the core capacities of the human being. This may help to explain why Anonymus Iamblichus and ps-Archytas are paired off together. Ps-Archytas had emphasized how human beings, uniquely among animals, had the capacity for wisdom (σοφία) and rational speech (λόγος): the former was identified with the contemplation of the summa genera as instantiated in the universe, and the latter with the instrument that makes it possible to communicate such knowledge as is guaranteed by wisdom.⁵³ To be sure, the stakes would appear to be lower for Anonymus Iamblichus: what little we hear about wisdom and eloquence here in no way implies lofty contemplation of the things-that-are, much less a semiotics of being; and, in fact, as we will see later on, a more likely understanding of wisdom in Anonymus Iamblichus would link it more firmly to art (τέχνη). Additionally, Anonymus Iamblichus introduces a relatively unfamiliar concept to philosophical and/or sophistic ethical theory: eloquence (εὐγλωσσία). This term usually appears in negative contexts, referring in fifth-century BCE Greek tragedy to "slick-speaking," underpinned by false pretense, but Anonymus Iamblichus intends something far more civically beneficial.⁵⁴ Moreover, it is remarkable that of the four goods listed in *On Excellence*—wisdom, courage, eloquence, and excellence—it is eloquence that receives the slenderest commentary in the extracts that follow. And indeed, as we will see in fragment 2, some doubt is cast on the value of the art of argumentation (τέχνη κατὰ λόγους) in the absence of a sufficient amount of time to practice and develop it. Hence, we should be hesitant to assume that we are dealing with a strict champion of rhetoric such as Gorgias of Leontini, whose defense of the teaching of the art of speech as against the teaching of excellence/virtue (ἀρετή) was celebrated in antiquity.⁵⁵

Given the frequency with which intellectuals debated the question of whether excellence (ἀρετή) is teachable in the latter part of the fifth century BCE and beyond, it is remarkable to see that Anonymus Iamblichus does not express his view explicitly.⁵⁶ He skirts around the issue, claiming in fragment 1 that excellence, along with wisdom, courage, and eloquence,

a similar light, consider the explanation of Athena's epithet "Thrice-born" (τριτογένεια), given by the *Etymologicum Orionis* (DK 68 B 2): "According to Democritus, she is considered to be wisdom (φρόνησις). For these three things arise out of wise thinking: deliberating well, speaking without error, and doing the things which one ought to do."

⁵² Another strong connection must be observed between Anonymus Iamblichus and Protagoras: it comes in a Syriac collection of Greek sayings (DK 80 B 12). Protagoras is claimed to have said, "Effort, work, study, education, and wisdom are the garland of glory that is woven out of the flowers of an eloquent language that is placed on the head of those who love it. In fact, language is difficult, but its flowerings are rich and always new, and those who look, those who applaud, and those who teach are happy, and their pupils make progress and fools are annoyed – or perhaps they are not even annoyed, because they are not intelligent enough" (trans. Laks and Most, from Hugonnard-Roche's French).

⁵³ ps-Archyt. *On Wisdom* fr. 2 (pp. 44.5–15 Thesleff = Iamb. *Protr.* 4, pp. 18.23–19.11 Pistelli) and 3 (p. 44.18–20 Thesleff = Iamb. *Protr.* 4, p. 20.16–19 Pistelli). See Horky, "Ps-Archytas," 27–31.

⁵⁴ It is negatively tinged in Ar. *Nu.* 445; also see Eur. fr. 56 and 206 Nauck. See Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 78 n. 5 and Mari, *Anonimo*, 154–5.

⁵⁵ Most notably by Meno in Pl. *Men.* (95c1–4 = DK 82 A 21).

⁵⁶ Even within the Socratic circle, there was a debate about whether ἀρετή was teachable. Antisthenes thought it was (D.L. 6.10–1 = SSR V A 134), and Simon the Cobbler that it wasn't (D.L. 2.122 = SSR VI B 87).

can be “learned” (*μανθάνονα*) through continuous application and commitment, but with no stipulation of the *requirement* of a good teacher; this fact alone should make us wary of ascribing authorship to a Sophist such as Hippias or Prodicus.⁵⁷ In fragment 2, the author expands on this notion, while at the same time focusing especially on the ends of this activity, which are a good reputation and universal approval:

From the moment when one wishes to acquire a good reputation among human beings, and to show himself to have the sorts of qualities he has, he must straightaway begin while young and apply himself to it consistently, and not in different ways at different times. For when each of these [goods] has persisted, having had a firm beginning and growing to perfection, he acquires a firm reputation and fame (*λαμβάνει βέβαιον τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὸ κλέος*) for the following reasons: because by now he is unflinchingly trusted, and human envy (*φθόνος*) does not stick to him – [envy], on account of which humans neither extol nor speak in praise of things, but instead falsify them, criticizing them unjustly. For it is no pleasure for humans to assign honor to someone else (for they suppose that they themselves are being deprived of something); but if they are bested by necessity itself and induced little by little over a long time, they become praisers, even if unwillingly. At the same time, if someone indeed shows himself to [really] have the sorts of qualities he has – or [if] he is setting a trap and hunting after reputation by means of deceit (*ἐπὶ ἀπάτῃ*) and, by leading [other] humans on, embellishes (*καλλωπίζεται*) the very things he has achieved – they are not in doubt about this (*οὐκ ἀμφιβάλλουσιν*).⁵⁸ But if excellence is worked at (*ἀσκηθεῖσα ἡ ἀρετή*) in the way I just mentioned, it engenders trust for itself, and universal approval (*εὐκλεία*). For humans, once they have been conquered in strength (*ἐαλωκότες . . . ἤδη κατὰ τὸ ἰσχυρόν*), no longer have the capacity to resort to envy, nor do they still believe that they are being deceived.

What is more, whenever an extended period of time accompanies each achievement and activity, that gives strength to what one has been working at (*κρατύνει τὸ ἀσκούμενον*), whereas a short amount of time is not able to accomplish this. And, in the case of art (*τέχνη*), if someone were to acquire and learn the art of argumentation (*κατὰ λόγους*),⁵⁹ he would become [a practitioner] not inferior to his teacher in a short amount of time; but, in the case of excellence (*ἀρετή*),⁶⁰ it would not be possible for someone who begins late or [works at it] for a short amount of time to bring to perfection that excellence which accrues from many achievements. Rather, it is necessary for him to be reared along with it [sc. excellence],⁶¹ and to grow up with it, avoiding ignoble arguments and habits, and instead practicing and working hard [at it] over a long time, and with much care. At the same time, a disadvantage of this sort also attends a good reputation gained in a short

⁵⁷ A teacher is mentioned in fr. 2, but rather hypothetically, and only in the service of showing that if someone does indeed go to a teacher for learning the goods, he will only learn them properly if he does so with long-term commitment.

⁵⁸ Literally, they “do not contest it.” The language is forensic.

⁵⁹ Understanding, with Dillon and Gergel, *Sophists*, *λόγοι* in the plural as “arguments” or “argumentation,” rather than mere speech or speeches.

⁶⁰ The emphatic first positioning for these terms here indicates a fundamental contrast.

⁶¹ It is unclear whether this refers to “the art of argumentation” or “excellence,” but local proximity would indicate the latter. Indeed, if, as I believe, “the art of argumentation” is but a part of “excellence” as a whole, the latter would elegantly imply the former.

amount of time: those who suddenly, or in a short amount of time, become wealthy, or wise, or good, or courageous, are not received with pleasure by human beings.

(*Anon. Iamb. DK 89 fr. 2* = *Iamb. Protr.* pp. 96.1–97.8 Pistelli)

In fr. 2, Anonymus Iamblichus sets out to explain why excellence (*ἀρετή*), when it has been properly worked at (*ἀσκηθεῖσα*), engenders trust, which is the basis for a truly positive reputation in society. Hence, we see an expanded discussion of the importance of repeated practice (*ἄσκησις*) for gradually achieving excellence.⁶² Anonymus Iamblichus presents an acute analysis of the problem of envy (*φθόνος*), as it attaches itself to individuals who seek a good reputation within a social community. For Anonymus Iamblichus, envy is a most destructive social emotion, since it compels people to distrust a good man, and it threatens to ruin the project of pursuing a positive reputation in society.⁶³ It goes so far as to make people tell falsehoods about a good person.⁶⁴ We might here recall Hesiod's moralizing tale of the Iron Age (*Op.* 190–6), in which there is “no grace for the oath-keeper, the just, the good” (*οὐδέ τις εὐόρκου χάρις... οὐδέ δικαίου οὐδ' ἀγαθοῦ*), and all men are attended by “Envy, malice-tongued, revelling in evil” (*Ζῆλος... δυσκέλαδος κακόχαρτος*). A more proximate comparison both in time and sense, however, is with a *sententia* attributed to Democritus, which goes so far as to assert that envy is the root cause of civil strife:

If each man did not do harm to another, then the laws wouldn't prevent each man from living under his own authority. For envy furnishes an origin of strife.

οὐκ ἂν ἐκώλυον οἱ νόμοι ζῆν ἕκαστον κατ' ἰδίην ἐξουσίην, εἰ μὴ ἕτερος ἕτερον ἐλυμαίνετο. φθόνος γὰρ στάσις ἀρχὴν ἀπεργάζεται.

(*Stob. 3.38.53* = *Democritus DK 68 B 245*)

Democritus' ethical thought, as expressed in the *sententiae* preserved by Stobaeus, focuses on the social effects of individual human emotions.⁶⁵ Envy, in particular, supplies the reason why laws prescribe a social contract, according to which people are not allowed to live as they wish, without thought of their fellow man. For envy is taken to be the root cause of humans harming one another. Another *sententia* attributed to Democritus takes this proposition further, claiming of those who cultivate desire for rivalry that:

All love for contention is thoughtless: for, if one focuses on what is harmful for his enemy, he misses what is advantageous for himself.

⁶² This appeal to practice is shared by several Socratics, including Aristippus (*Gnom. Vat.* 743 n. 34 = *SSR IV A 124*) and Antisthenes (*Stob. 2.31.68* = *SSR V A 163*), although they appeal to *γυμνάσιον* rather than *ἄσκησις*.

⁶³ Compare the *sententia* of Democritus (attributed to Democrates at *DK 68 B 88*): “He who envies harms himself as if he were [his own] enemy.”

⁶⁴ Compare, again, the Democritean *sententia*, attributed to Democrates (*DK 68 B 63*), concerning the ethical imperative of praising those who do well, as against those who speak well of cheats: “It is a fine thing to speak well of good actions; for to do so of base actions is the act of a counterfeit and a cheat” (*εὐλογεῖν ἐπὶ καλοῖς ἔργοις καλόν· τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ φλαύροις κίβδηλον καὶ ἀπατεῶνός ἐργον*).

⁶⁵ See J. Warren, “Democritus on Social and Psychological Harm,” in A. Brancacci and P.-M. Morel, *Democritus: Science, the Arts, and the Care of the Soul* (Leiden, 2007), 87–104, at 94.

φιλονεικίη πᾶσα ἀνόητος· τὸ γὰρ κατὰ τοῦ δυσμενέος βλαβερὸν θεωρεῖσα τὸ ἴδιον συμφέρον οὐ βλέπει.

(Stob. 3.20.62 = Democritus DK 68 B 237)

The Democritean sentiment here extends what Anonymus Iamblichi had said about envy: the desire for rivalry (*φιλονεικίη*) is not simply bad for the community, or one's city-state;⁶⁶ it's also bad for one's self, because one who concentrates his attention on what can be used to harm another will neglect to see what advantages can arise out of collaboration with that person. This is reason to be called a "thoughtless" (*ἀνόητος*) person.⁶⁷ The criticism of love for rivalry in the *sententiae* of Democritus is indicative of other connections to *On Excellence*: as we will see with fragment 4 in section 4.2, the appeal to "love of-" (*φιλο-*) abstractions is pervasive throughout the fragments of Anonymus Iamblichi, and once again confirms the important connections between Democritus' ethical fragments and the thought and compositional style of Anonymus Iamblichi.

Correspondences such as these, which concern what I am calling "social emotions," return our analysis to the issue of Iamblichus' attribution of a "middle" or "mixed" style of exhortation to Anonymus Iamblichi's work. Like ps-Archytas, whose *On Wisdom* is paired with Anonymus Iamblichi's *On Excellence* in the quotation ring-composition, Democritus is a strong candidate for someone who *approximates* Pythagoreanism "strictly speaking" (*ἀντικρυσ*), i.e., an "exoteric" or "mathematical" Pythagorean. Indeed, I would argue, there is good reason to conjecture that Iamblichus believed the work *On Excellence* to be authored by Democritus himself, which is why he included it in his *Exhortation* and paired it with *On Wisdom*, a work he thought to be by Archytas of Tarentum. It is clear that the Neo-Pythagorean Thrasyllus, who edited both Democritus' and Plato's corpora in the first century BCE, believed Democritus to have become an "emulator of the Pythagoreans" (*ζηλωτῆς γεγονέναι τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν*),⁶⁸ and Democritus' own late fifth-century BCE contemporary, the historian of music Glaucon of Rhegium, claimed that Democritus "heard" (*ἀκοῦσαι*), i.e., was a student of, one of the Pythagoreans (*τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν τινος*).⁶⁹ Other figures within the Pythagorean-Platonist historical tradition, including the shadowy Apollodorus of Cyzicus and Iamblichus' teacher Porphyry, confirmed and expanded this supposition.⁷⁰ Thrasyllus is also believed by most scholars to have placed Democritus' work *Pythagoras*, in which he found Democritus recalling Pythagoras for the wonder he instilled (*καὶ αὐτοῦ Πυθαγόρου μέμνηται, θαυμάζων αὐτόν ἐν τῷ ὁμωνύμῳ συγγράμματι*), at the head of the tetralogy of his work⁷¹—just like Iamblichus' *On the*

⁶⁶ As is the case in DK 68 B 252, where the Democritean *sententia* argues that one should take greatest consideration for the affairs of the city-state by "not loving contention, which is contrary to what is fair, nor conferring upon oneself a strength that is contrary to what is useful for the whole" (*μήτε φιλονεικέοντα παρὰ τὸ ἐπεικεῖς μήτε ἰσχύν ἐαυτῷ περιτιθέμενον παρὰ τὸ χρηστὸν τὸ τοῦ ξυνού*).

⁶⁷ The vice of being "thoughtless" appears frequently in the Democritean *sententiae* (DK 68 B 197, B 199–202, B 204–6).

⁶⁸ The term *ζηλωτῆς* refers elsewhere in Iamblichus' works to illegitimate Pythagoreans or "Pythagorists" (e.g., Iamb. VP 80, p. 46.13–17 Deubner-Klein). See Horky, *Plato*, 127–8 with n. 6.

⁶⁹ D.L. 9.38 = DK 68 A 1 = Thrasyllus Testimonia 18b Tarrant = Glaucon of Rhegium fr. 5 Lanata.

⁷⁰ The otherwise unknown Apollodorus of Cyzicus (DK 74) is cited by Diogenes Laertius (9.38) as claiming that Democritus was a companion (*συγγεγονέναι*) of Philolaus, and by Pliny (NH 24.167) as a follower (*adsector*) of Democritus. Porphyry, Iamblichus' teacher, quotes Duris of Samos himself as saying that a son of Pythagoras, Arimnestus, was Democritus' teacher (VP 3 = DK 14 A6 = BNJ 76 F 23).

⁷¹ D.L. 9.38 = DK 68 A 1 = Thrasyllus Testimonia 18b Tarrant.

Pythagorean Life, the biographical work which was placed first in the *Compendium of Pythagorean Doctrines*, and *Pythagoras' Golden Verses*, which appeared at the beginning of his *Exhortation to Philosophy*.⁷² Whether or not it is *historically* true that Democritus was himself a Pythagorean—I suspend judgment on this question for now—the association of Democritus with Pythagoreanism by Thrasyllus and others would help to explain why Anonymus IamblichI, whose text shows many remarkable connections to the ethical fragments of Democritus, is paired off with Archytas in Iamblichus' *Exhortation*: it is not implausible that Iamblichus would have believed (a) that the author of *On Excellence* was Democritus, and (b) that Democritus' philosophical views, as reflected in the work *On Excellence*, sufficiently reflected for Iamblichus' purposes the "mixed" or "middle" mode of exhortation to philosophy.⁷³ We might here wish to recall that the Democritean *sententiae*, some of which survive under the title *Golden Sayings* (γνώμαι χρυσαί),⁷⁴ were preserved by Stobaeus, who obtained his library substantially from Iamblichus himself.⁷⁵ These *sententiae*, as evidenced in this section, have an aphoristic quality, appearing as short, self-contained units that promise ethical wisdom—not unlike the *symbola/acusmata* of Pythagoras himself.

4.2. Fragments 3–5: Excellence, Human Psychology, and Society

Assuming that someone has the natural ability and commitment to attaining excellence as it was described earlier, i.e., as the perfected capacity to deploy wisdom, courage, and eloquence, Anonymus IamblichI now turns to the problem of the application of these goods in one's life. As we mentioned previously, the defense of law and justice would appear to be a commonplace exercise in late fifth-century BCE Greece, with Glaucon referring to a multitude of figures who sought to defend law and justice by appeal to a social contract among humans. Moreover, we might note here that a text entitled *On Law and Justice*, attributed to the mathematical Pythagorean Archytas of Tarentum, survives in several fragments in Stobaeus' collection, which was surely constructed on the basis of Iamblichus' own library.⁷⁶ Anonymus IamblichI would also appear to fall into this group of defenders of law and justice. From fragment 3, when law and justice first appear in the treatise, until the very end of the surviving fragments, there is a sustained defense of lawful and just social application of the goods that make up excellence. This application is contrasted against the unlawful and unjust application of these goods, which constitutes

⁷² Generally, I agree with Leszl's ("Works," 21–23) judicious treatment of the evidence concerning Democritus and Pythagoreanism.

⁷³ It is true that Democritus is not listed in the catalogue of Pythagoreans found at the end of his *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* (VP 267). But, as Leszl ("Works," 23) notes, the evidence itself within Iamblichus' corpus of atomists being Pythagorean is inconsistent. Iamblichus does not mention Leucippus in the catalogue, but does include him at VP 103 in the list of the second-generation mathematical Pythagoreans (μαθητεύσαντες τῷ Πυθαγόρᾳ πρεσβύτῃ νέοι, as contrasted to the first-generation παλαιότατοι καὶ αὐτῷ συγχρονίσαντες)—a list that includes Philolaus, Eurytus, Archytus, Empedocles, and Hippasus, who are assuredly mathematical/exoteric Pythagoreans. Iamblichus' teacher Porphyry quotes Duris of Samos as saying that a son of Pythagoras, Arimnestus, was Democritus' teacher (VP 3 = DK 14 A6).

⁷⁴ According to Mss. B and C of the "Democrates" collection.

⁷⁵ See C. Macris, "Jamblique et la littérature pseudo-pythagoricienne", in S. C. Mimouni, *Apocryphité* (Turnhout, 2002), 77–129, at 88–106.

⁷⁶ See chapter 20 of this volume.

the opposite of excellence, baseness (*κακία*). Anonymus Iamblichi marks this transition at the beginning of fragment 3:

Whenever someone desiring one of these [fine and good things] – either eloquence, wisdom, or strength – through hard work obtains and possesses it to perfection, he should employ it for good and lawful [ends] (*εἰς ἀγαθὰ καὶ νόμιμα καταχρησθαι δεῖ*); but if anyone will use the good that is in his possession for unjust and unlawful [ends] (*εἰς ἄδικά τε καὶ ἄνομα*), this sort of thing is the basest of all (*πάντων κάκιστον*),⁷⁷ and it would be better if this were absent to him than present to him. And just as someone who possesses one of these becomes perfectly good (*ἀγαθὸς τελέως*) when he employs (*καταχρῶμενος*) them⁷⁸ to good [ends], so too in turn he who uses [them] to ignoble [ends] becomes perfectly and wholly base (*πάγκακος τελέως*).⁷⁹

In the case of the human who aspires to the whole of excellence (*τὸν...ἀρετῆς ὀρεγόμενον τῆς συμπάσης*), we must examine on the basis of what speech or achievement (*ἐκ τίνος λόγου ἢ ἔργου*) he might become as good as possible. This sort of human [sc. one who is as good as possible] would be the one who is beneficial (*ὠφέλιμος*) to as many people as possible. Indeed, if someone confers benefit upon his neighbors *by giving money*,⁸⁰ he will be forced to be base (*ἀναγκασθήσεται κακὸς εἶναι*) when he returns⁸¹ to collect the money; and then, he could not accumulate resources in such abundance that he would not end up [himself] being in need, owing to his grants and donations. And again, this is a second drawback that follows upon the accumulation of money, if one goes from wealthy to poor, or from having [much] to having nothing. And furthermore, if he were to make donations, how could he ensure that his capacity to gift should never fail?⁸² In sum, how could someone be a beneficiary of humans – not by distributing money, but in some other way – and do these things not with baseness (*κακία*), but with excellence (*ἀρετή*)? This will be so in the following way: if he acts in support of laws and justice (*εἰ τοῖς νόμοις τε καὶ τῷ δικαίῳ ἐπικουροίη*). For this is what establishes and binds together cities and human beings (*τοῦτο γὰρ τὰς τε πόλεις καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τὸ συνοικίζον καὶ τὸ συνέχον*). (*Anon. Iamb. DK 89 fragment 3 = Iamb. Protr. pp. 97.16–98.11 Pistelli*)

Having argued previously that one should seek to attain excellence in wisdom, courage, and eloquence, in order to gain universal appeal among people, Anonymus Iamblichi shifts the argument to the proper application of these skills. In particular, we note that the application of these skills to unlawful and unjust ends is the worst thing of all, even worse

⁷⁷ I translate *κακός* and other correlated words with “base,” but it could also be translated “bad,” “evil,” or “wicked.” Its abstract nominalization “baseness” (*κακία*) is clearly contrasted in fr. 3 with “excellence” (*ἀρετή*).

⁷⁸ The text unmistakably has the plural *αὐτοῖς*, although both Laks and Most, *Sophists*, and Dillon and Gergel, *Sophists*, have a singular “it.”

⁷⁹ Retaining Mss. *τελέως*, contra Diels.

⁸⁰ Italics mine, since the argument that follows seeks to refute those who believe that one is beneficial to the greatest number of people through giving money.

⁸¹ I take this to be the force of *πάλιν αὖ* with *συλλέγων*, rather than “he will be obliged to be wicked again in turn,” as Laks and Most, *Sophists*, have it. There is no suggestion that the person who gives money as a benefit to his neighbor is, by virtue of this act, *κακός*.

⁸² Accepting the transposition of these lines here, from below, where they appear in the manuscripts after the next sentence, as suggested by Laks and Most, *Sophists*, 148 n. 1.

than if one had never attained proficiency in these skills in the first place. As we will see in fragments 6 and 8, this particular worry on the part of Anonymus Iamblichī relates to what I will call the “Superman”—a human being perfected in body and soul, and with super-human abilities, who has the potential to become either a great leader, or a terrible tyrant. Anonymus Iamblichī establishes a strong polarity: the person who achieves proficiency in these skills, and hence “excellence,” can become completely good if and only if he employs these skills to good purposes, so too the person who employs them to base purposes achieves complete baseness. Key here is the notion that *application* (καταχρησθαι; καταχρῶμενος) of skills is a necessary condition for achieving a state of perfection—either for perfect excellence or for perfect baseness.

Anonymus Iamblichī expands this proposition further by defining exactly which way one is to achieve perfect excellence. The answer—quite surprising and unique for an ancient intellectual—is through conferring benefit on the *greatest number of people*. This would indicate that Anonymus Iamblichī seeks to promote a vision of an ideal leader who operates with a view to what is best for the *dēmos*, i.e., a democratic leader, after the fashion of Pericles of Athens.⁸³ Anonymus Iamblichī suspects that after registering this assertion, his reader will assume that the benefit to be conferred is the distribution of money and gifts, and Anonymus Iamblichī sets out immediately to show that this assumption is unsound. The problem with giving money to others is that it will inevitably (ἀναγκασθήσεται) lead to “baseness” (κακία; κακός)—either one will express base intentions if he returns to collect the money loaned, or he himself will run out of money and become the poor person he sought to help; after all, money doesn’t grow on trees.⁸⁴ Alternatively, so Anonymus Iamblichī argues, it is by supporting law and justice, the guarantors of civic success, that one properly confers benefit on the greatest number of people, both as citizens, and as private individuals.⁸⁵ Euergetism of the type advanced by Anonymus Iamblichī, which consists in the defense of law and justice at all costs, is a necessary condition for becoming a “good” person, once one has attained proficiency in the arts of excellence. This is because, according to Anonymus Iamblichī, law and justice are what causes bonds to develop among households, i.e., what produces synoecism, and what sustains those bonds over time—the most explicit example of Anonymus Iamblichī’s commitment to a principle of the social contract.

For the moment, however, Anonymus Iamblichī sets aside the issue of law and justice; it will return soon, in fragment 6. Fragment 4 follows closely upon the former and represents an extended analysis of human emotions:

At any rate, every man should be exceedingly self-controlled (ἐγκρατέστατον... διαφερόντως). He would be that sort of man to the greatest extent, if he were to prevail

⁸³ It is possible, I believe, to overstate the connection between Periclean democracy and Anonymus Iamblichī, but we should recall Pericles’ assertion (Th. 2.37.1) that in democratic Athens the “conduct [of political affairs] is not with an eye to the few, but to the many” (μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ’ ἐξ πλείονος οἰκεῖν).

⁸⁴ Similarly, Antisthenes is represented by Xenophon (*Smp.* 4.2–5 = SSR V A 83) as refuting Callias’ claim that all it takes to make people more just is to give them money. Antisthenes shows that this euergetic behavior makes Callias’ beneficiaries treat him even worse than they had before. To be sure, this is not the same point that Anonymus Iamblichī is making.

⁸⁵ Ciriaci (*L’Anonimo*, 128–33) considers the best comparison here to be to Protagoras, whom he assumes to be the intellectual with the closest ties to Periclean democracy. But all the evidence he brings to bear is circumstantial.

over (κρείσσων)⁸⁶ money, which corrupts all men when they are presented with it, and if he were to be unsparing with his life (τῆς ψυχῆς ἀφειδής)⁸⁷ in the pursuit of just things and striving for excellence; for most people lack self-control in these two matters. And they suffer this condition for the following reason: they love their lives (φιλοψυχοῦσι), because one's life (ἡ ψυχὴ) is one's property (ἡ ζωή).⁸⁸ Hence, they cherish it and are desirous for it because of their affection for their property and their familiarity with [the property] that contributed to their upbringing. And they love money (φιλοχρηματοῦσι) for the following reasons, which cause them fear: what are these? Diseases, old age, sudden losses – I don't mean losses that arise out of law-suits⁸⁹ (for one can take precautions against these and protect oneself from them), but losses of these sorts: fires, deaths of household members or livestock, and other misfortunes, some of which pertain to their bodies, others their lives, and others their money. So then, it is because of all these things – to have recourse to money in their eventuality – that every man aspires to wealth. Some other [factors], no less than the aforementioned, also drive humans to moneymaking: competitions for honor (αἱ φιλοτιμίαι), rivalries (οἱ ζῆλοι), and political contests (αἱ δυναστεῖαι), on account of which they consider money of high value, because it contributes to such [factors]. But whoever is truly a good man hunts after reputation by means of no other sort of gilded ornamentation (κόσμος περικείμενος) than his own excellence. (*Anon. Iamb. DK 89 fragment 4* = *Iamb. Protr.* pp. 98.17–99.15 Pistelli)

In attempting to censure further the desire for wealth, Anonymus Iamblichi constructs an intricate argument about human emotions. He praises the self-control that the man of excellence embodies in the face of various sorts of harmful desires that are rooted in the human condition.⁹⁰ Ultimately, the problem with humans is that their desire for money arises out of their desire for their own life (φιλοψυχία). Both nature and fortune conspire to threaten human lives: nature causes us to grow old and to become diseased, whereas bad fortune causes harm—generally in the form of injury to one's household property. Consequently, humans become afraid for their life (ψυχὴ), which is described as a sort of property or means for survival (ζωή), probably in a Homeric sense.⁹¹ This claim anticipates Locke's assertion that one's life is in fact one's property (*Two Treatises of Government* 2.87), along with liberty and possessions. To be sure, Anonymus Iamblichi is not seeking to establish the positive rights of individual human beings; rather, he makes an observation about the way people treat their lives in order to explain human desire for wealth and possessions. But wealth and possessions cannot satisfy the criterion of

⁸⁶ Literally, “be stronger than/superior to.” The phrase recurs in Pericles' funeral oration (Th. 2.60.5), where it is an expegegesis of the term φιλόπολις (“lover of one's own city”).

⁸⁷ As noted by Dillon and Gergel (*Sophists*, 404), the term ψυχὴ here adopts the archaic Greek meaning of “life-force.”

⁸⁸ The text is corrupt, but I adopt Pistelli's conjecture of τούτοις ἡ ζωὴ ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ and understand ζωὴ in the Homeric sense of “life-property” (cf. LSJ 1a). A comprehensive analysis of this troublesome phrase, including its history, is presented by Mari, *Anonimo*, 210–15.

⁸⁹ Literally, “laws” (ἐκ τῶν νόμων), but the explanation that follows would imply that lawsuits are specifically intended here, and not laws in general (cf. Dillon and Gergel, *Sophists*, 314).

⁹⁰ In particular, ἐγκράτεια was praised by certain Socratics, e.g., Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.5.1–6) and Antiphon (D. L. 2.74–5 = SSR IV A 96 and Stob. 3.17.17 = V A 98).

⁹¹ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 14.96, 14.208, 16.429.

goodness: they are but “gilded ornamentation” (κόσμος περικείμενος) that cannot substitute for the true excellence (ἀρετή) that produces a good reputation in society.⁹²

In the short fragment that follows, Anonymus Iamblichus amplifies his analysis of the human condition, love for one’s life, and supplies a solution to the problem of death:

If it were to be a feature of the human condition that, unless death occurs at the hands of another, one would be ageless and immortal for the rest of time, then there would be a great deal of sympathy for a human who cherishes his life; but since old age, which is worse for humans, is a feature of the human condition for [one whose] life is extended, and not immortality, then it is truly a mark both of great ignorance and of habituation to ignoble arguments and desires to preserve this [sc. one’s life] with scorn, and not to leave behind something immortal in its place, a renown (εὐλογία) that is eternal (ἀέναν) and always thriving (ἀεὶ ζῶση), instead of one that is mortal. (*Anon. Iamb. DK 89 fragment 5* = *Iamb. Protr.* pp. 99.19–28 Pistelli)

Anonymus Iamblichus appeals to a traditional Greek notion of the immortality of renown as contrasted with mortal goods, a commonplace from Homer forward (e.g., *Il.* 9.410–16; Heraclitus DK 22 B 29); as Jacqueline de Romilly noticed, the formulation used by Anonymus Iamblichus, εὐλογία, is relatively rare in classical Greek, but recurs in Thucydides, notably in Pericles’ *Funeral Oration* (2.42.1).⁹³ In the same vein, Anonymus Iamblichus appears to take a page from Gorgias’ *Funeral Oration* (DK 82 B 6), where the sophist exclaims that the longing (ὁ πόθος) that people feel for deceased Athenian soldiers “has not died with them, but it lives on, immortal, in bodies not incorporeal” (οὐ συναπέθανεν, ἀλλ’ ἀθάνατος ἐν οὐκ ἀσωμάτοις σώμασι ζῆι), i.e., in words.⁹⁴ From this perspective, it is clear that Anonymus Iamblichus appropriated material from many areas of popular Greek ethical discourse, including the area that was of paramount importance to Athenians: the celebration of the war dead at the annual *Funeral Oration*.⁹⁵

4.3. Fragments 6–8: Law, Justice, and the “Superman”

Fragment 6 marks a transition in the argument of *On Excellence* in at least three ways. First, it features the final occurrence of excellence (ἀρετή) in the work, thus completing discussion of its application, which had been threaded through fragments 1–5 (although, to be sure, Anonymus Iamblichus continues to discuss the other goods that make up excellence). Second, it stages a natural transition to the defense of law and justice, which had been mentioned in fragment 3, but remained dormant while Anonymus Iamblichus went through

⁹² Compare the Socratic Aristippus’ claim that cosmetics (κοσμουμένη τῷ προσώπῳ) cannot hide the unshapeliness (ἀμορφία) of a woman’s soul (Antonius Melissa 2.34.43 = SSR IV A 139).

⁹³ J. de Romilly, “Sur un écrit anonyme ancien et ses rapports avec Thucydide” [“Thucydide”], *Journal des Savants* 1 (1980), 11–35, at 28–9.

⁹⁴ Accepting the text ἐν οὐκ ἀσωμάτοις, attested in Mon. Par. 2916 and 2918. That words are corporeal according to Gorgias is made clear at the *Encomium of Helen* 8 (DK 82 B 11), on which see P. S. Horky, “The Imprint of the Soul: Psychosomatic Affection in Plato, Gorgias, and the ‘Orphic’ Gold Tablets,” *Museion* III.6 (2006), 371–86, at 376–7.

⁹⁵ Generally, on the relations between Anonymus Iamblichus and Pericles’ *Funeral Oration*, see De Romilly, “Thucydide.”

an explanation of human emotions and their effects upon society in the subsequent fragments. And finally, the defense of law and justice, which *a priori* support social cohesion and personal integrity (so the end of fragment 3), provides the author with the opportunity to extol respect for law (εὐνομία) and to censure the lack thereof (ἀνομία). The division between the first and second parts of the work is at first glance striking, and might be thought to indicate a new treatise; but, as I will show, the fragments 6–8 both subtly build upon previous arguments found in fragments 1–5, and develop more comprehensive accounts of topics that were passed over in brief, including law and justice, personal emotions, lawsuits, and the problem of fortune.

Anonymus Iamblichus provides his final thoughts on excellence (ἀρετή) in the negative, by arguing against those who would believe that the proper object of one's desires should be greed, or that power founded upon greed ought to be considered a kind of excellence:

One should not aspire to greed (οὐκ ἐπὶ πλεονεξίαν ὀρμᾶν δεῖ), nor believe that power (κράτος) is an excellence (ἀρετή) founded upon greed, whereas obedience to the laws (τῶν νόμων ὑπακούειν) is cowardice; for this very notion is the most ignoble (πονηροτάτη), and everything opposed to what is good arises out of it, viz. baseness and harm. For if humans have been born naturally (ἐφύσαν) incapable of surviving⁹⁶ alone (ἀδύνατοι καθ' ἑνα ζῆν), formed associations with one another under the compulsion of necessity, and discovered all the means of survival and mechanisms (τεχνήματα) for achieving it; and if it was not possible to exist with one another and to pass their lives in a state of lack of respect for law (ἀνομία)⁹⁷ (for their losses would be greater in this state than if they were to be alone) – by reason of these necessities, then, law and justice rule over human beings (τὸν τε νόμον καὶ τὸ δίκαιον ἐμβασιλεύειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις) and can in no way be displaced. For these [sc. law and justice] are strongly bound (ἐνδεδέσθαι) in [us] by nature (φύσει). Indeed, if someone were to be born in possession of such a nature as this, invulnerable in his flesh (ἄτρωτος τὸν χρῶτα), immune to disease and affections (ἄνοσός τε καὶ ἀπαθής), of supernatural ability (ὑπερφυής), adamantine (ἀδαμάντινος) in body and life, one might suppose that power founded upon greed would suffice for someone of this sort (for someone like this would have the capacity of going unpunished if he were to refuse to submit to the law); and yet his supposition would be incorrect. For even if there could be someone like this, which could never happen, it would only be by allying himself with the laws and justice, fortifying them, and making use of his strength for their sake, and for the sake of what supports them, that someone like this could ensure his safety; otherwise, he would not last. For all humans would resolve to stand opposed to someone of this nature because of their respect for law (εὐνομία), and the multitude (τὸ πλῆθος) would prevail over and overcome a man of this sort, either through skill or might (τέχνη ἢ δυνάμει). Accordingly, it is evident that true power (αὐτὸ τὸ κράτος), which is power properly understood, is preserved by law and justice. (*Anon. Iamb. DK 89 fragment 6 = Iamb. Protr.* pp. 100.5–101.6 Pistelli)

⁹⁶ As elsewhere in this text, ζῆν refers both to survival and to flourishing.

⁹⁷ I translate ἀνομία as “lack of respect for law,” since the term as it is used by Anonymus Iamblichus appears to involve not only the condition of acting without law (i.e., lawlessness), but also the psychological state of not affording respect to the law.

Here, with the introduction of the principle of *πλεονεξία* (greed in relation to money or possessions, but more generally the term means “having-more-than-one’s-share”) presents Anonymus Iamblichus with an opportunity to reflect upon the idea of power (*κράτος*). In particular, he addresses an assertion that was in the air, namely that power grounded in greed (*πλεονεξία*) was itself something to be desired, or even a type of excellence, and its correlative, that obeying the laws was a sign of cowardice, i.e., the opposite of courage. The most famous defense of *πλεονεξία* in the context of the production of Anonymus Iamblichus’s *On Excellence* is of course put into the mouth of Callicles, in Plato’s *Gorgias*:

I believe that the people who institute our laws are the weak and the many. They do this, and so they assign praise and blame with themselves and their own advantage in mind. They’re afraid of the more powerful among men, the ones who are capable of having a greater share (*δυνατοὶ πλεόν ἔχειν*), and so they say that getting more than one’s share is “shameful” (*αἰσχρόν*) and “unjust” (*ἄδικον*), and that doing what’s unjust is trying to get more than one’s share (*τὸ ἀδικοῦν . . . τὸ πλεόν τῶν ἄλλων ζητεῖν ἔχειν*). They do this so that those people won’t get a greater share than they. (Pl. *Grg.* 483b4–c5; trans. Zeyl)

Callicles criticizes democracy and its champions for appealing to justice and shame in order to maximize their own advantage: their so-called defense of justice and shame is a sham, a thinly veiled excuse for self-aggrandizement.⁹⁸ The obvious reference here would be to Protagoras’ Great Speech in Plato’s own *Protagoras* (322d3–6), where, in particular, shame (*αἰδώς*) and justice (*δίκη*) are gifted to all human beings by Zeus in order to prevent the human race from being destroyed. But we should also infer that Callicles’ arguments were leveled, in particular, against pro-democratic political theorists (such as Anonymus Iamblichus, or Archytas of Tarentum) who maintained that *πλεονεξία* endangered the city-state and its citizens.⁹⁹ For his part, Anonymus Iamblichus tests the sort of Calliclean hypothesis, that *πλεονεξία* is a kind of excellence to which everyone should strive, by appeal to a thought experiment involving the most powerful human ever created: *the Superman*. This figure is impassable in body, immune from illness, made of the strongest metal on earth; his nature is beyond that of other mortals, and yet this nature cannot overcome the inborn bonds of law and justice.¹⁰⁰ The local reference in late fifth-century BCE culture might be thought to be Heracles, especially the Heracles of Prodicus’ *Choice of Heracles* (DK 84 B 2),¹⁰¹ although it is notable that Anonymus Iamblichus does not refer to his own Superman as a “hero,” “demigod,” or “god”: such a figure could easily refuse to submit to the law with impunity. The Superman would reappear throughout the history of philosophy and literature, and often in political contexts. In his *Pharsalia*, the Roman poet Lucan (60s CE) writes of Julius Caesar as “piercing and unstoppable,” a diabolical super-human who “overthrows anything that stands in the way of his pursuit of the

⁹⁸ On Callicles and democracy, see R. Kamtekar, “The Profession of Friendship: Callicles, Democratic Politics, and Rhetorical Education in Plato’s *Gorgias*,” *Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2005), 319–39.

⁹⁹ See Archyt. fr. 3 Huffman, and ps-Archytas, *On Law and Justice* fr. 3 (pp. 33.30–34.14 Thesleff), which are discussed elsewhere in this volume (see pp. 465–70).

¹⁰⁰ Hence, Anonymus Iamblichus deals with the traditional late fifth-century BCE problem of the dichotomy between law (*νόμος*) and nature (*φύσις*) by combining them. On this aspect of the text and its relations to Protagoras’ thought as presented in Plato’s eponymous dialogue, see Ciriaci, *L’Anonimo*, 156–161.

¹⁰¹ There are other problems here: Heracles is not, of course, impassable, but rather famous for his suffering. Similarly with titanic figures such as Prometheus.

summit... just like lighting, driven forth by wind through the clouds... flashes out and cracks the sky – its light, grazing with twisted flame, striking fear into the trembling people.”¹⁰² A century later, the satirist Lucian, in his dialogue *Voyage to the Lower World*, would in a lighter tone describe a certain tyrant as a “man beyond human” (ὑπεράνθρωπος τις ἀνὴρ), someone “equal to the gods” (ἰσόθεος), while still alive, but a “total joke” (παγγέλοιος) when dead (*Cat.* 16). But the Superman has received its most famous treatment in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche hypostasizes the man-beyond-man, the *Übermensch*, who rejects the standard goods of happiness, reason, virtue, justice, and piety, in favor of self-creation.¹⁰³ To be sure, among ancient paradigms, Nietzsche’s Superman is closest to Lucan’s Caesar—he is “lightning” and “madness,” a force of nature that cannot be stopped once he has been generated. Nietzsche rejects the “petty virtues, the petty prudences, the sand-grain discretion, the ant-swarm inanity, miserable ease, the ‘happiness of the greatest number’” that characterize the vulgar nobility of the “Higher Men”—figures not far from the aristocratic model advanced by Aristotle, and who may include Nietzsche’s own heroes, notably Goethe and, at one time, Wagner.¹⁰⁴ This amounts to an explicit rejection of the sort of democratic values embraced by Anonymus Iamblichus and, at least in a qualified sense, Socrates.¹⁰⁵ At least as far as *Zarathustra* goes, there is no explicit rejection of law as such or explicit embrace of Calliclean *πλεονεξία*, but it is no major leap of imagination to envision the possible dangerous consequences of such a Superman if he were ever to appear in human society.

There can be little doubt that Anonymus Iamblichus would reject the Nietzschean Superman on various grounds, not least that this figure would be eventually overcome by those very masses he aims to be superior to. This is because, for Anonymus Iamblichus, the Superman who rejects democratic society does not possess *true power* (αὐτὸ τὸ κράτος), which is sustained only through respect for law and support of justice. Human nature being what it is—weak enough to require a social contract for survival—the Superman would find himself in dire straits in due course, overcome either by someone’s trickery or by sheer mass strength. On the contrary, respect for law earns *trust* (πίστις), which is the core mechanism that guarantees the benefits that accrue from the social contract, even for the Superman:

Trust (πίστις) is the first thing that arises out of respect for law (ἐκ τῆς εὐνομίας) – [trust], which provides great benefits to humankind, and is to be classed among the great goods. For the sharing of resources¹⁰⁶ arises out of this [sc. trust], and accordingly even if they are scarce, they still suffice, because they are circulated, whereas, without it, they would not suffice, even in abundance. And the changes of fortune, which pertain to resources and to

¹⁰² Lucan, *Pharsalia* 1.146–154: *Acer et indomitus... inpellens, quidquid sibi summa petenti / obstaret... Qualiter expressum ventis per nubile fulmen... Emicuit rupitque diem populosque paventes / terruit obliqua praestringens lumina flamma.*

¹⁰³ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [*Zarathustra*], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Baltimore, 1961), 1.3.

¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 4.13.3.

¹⁰⁵ Also see Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 4.13.1: “You Higher Men, learn this from me: In the market-place no one believes in Higher Men. And if you want to speak there, very well, do so! But the mob blink and say: ‘We are all equal.’ ‘You Higher Men’ – thus the mob blink – ‘there are no Higher Men, we are all equal, man is but man, before God – we are all equal!’ Before God! But now this God has died. And let us not be equal before the mob. You Higher Men, depart from the market-place!”

¹⁰⁶ Literally, “money” (τὰ χρήματα), but Anonymus Iamblichus appears to want to make a broader point about how resources get distributed.

quality of life, whether for better or worse, are most suitably navigated by humans when they are underpinned by respect for law (ἐκ τῆς εὐνομίας). Those who have good fortune enjoy it in safety, and without fear of plots [against them], whereas those in turn who have bad fortune are supported by those who have good fortune by virtue of the pooling of resources¹⁰⁷ and trust, both of which are underpinned by respect for law. Again, owing to respect for law, humans get a release from time dedicated to political affairs (τὰ πράγματα), and can engage in the activities (τὰ ἔργα) that relate to their own living. In a situation in which law is respected, humans are relieved of the most unpleasant concern, and can engage in the most pleasant; for the concern over political affairs is the most unpleasant, whereas the concern over [one's private] activities is the most pleasant. Again, when they go to sleep, which is a respite for humans from troubles, they do so without fear or troubling anxiety, and when they wake up they are similarly affected, and they do not start up suddenly in fear, nor, in this way, after so pleasant a repose, do they wait for the day to make itself known, but rather, without fear, they direct their untroubled concerns toward the work that relates to their living, alleviating their cares with reliable and well-founded expectations by [the promise of] laying hold of good things, all of which are the consequence of respect for law.¹⁰⁸ And that which supplies the greatest evils to humans, war, which leads to subjugation and enslavement – this too is a greater threat to those who do not respect law, and less to those who do respect it. And many other goods [come about] in a state of respect for law, [goods] which support living and become a consolation (παραψυχή) for the difficulties that arise out of it. (*Anon. Iamb. DK 89 fragment 7 = Iamb. Protr.* pp. 101.17–102.24 Pistelli)

For the moment, Anonymus Iamblichi leaves behind the Superman thought experiment (he will return to it at the end of fragment 8) to reflect upon the good fortune/bad fortune and public/private distinctions he raised earlier on, back in fragments 3–4. These distinctions are analyzed through the lens of “respect for law” (εὐνομία), a concept that is typically applied to political contexts,¹⁰⁹ but here also, and untypically, to personal happiness. Not only will people who have obtained trust through respect for law benefit in good times, when the only real social danger is other people's plots against themselves, probably driven by envy; they will also weather the storm in bad times, when pooling of resources, which depends on trust, makes it possible to survive until better times come along. Moreover, according to Anonymus Iamblichi, respect for law engenders situations in which one is not beset by constant political provocations and can concentrate on one's own personal affairs, and especially those that make one's life better. For, he asserts, the most pleasant thing is to engage in one's personal activities, whereas the least pleasant is to deal with public affairs like lawsuits. Moreover, respect for law confirms both the natural state of sleep, which has as its aim respite for the troubles that one encounters during the day, and the proper

¹⁰⁷ If, as I think, this is what is meant by δια τὴν ἐπιμυξίαν. Doubtful is the technical economic interpretation of Musti and Mari, *Anonimo*, 328–30, which imports notions of circulation of currency through trade (cf. Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 184–5 n. 253).

¹⁰⁸ This sentence is problematic, and some of the vocabulary looks at first glance late (e.g., ἀντλήσις, which is a technical term from Hellenistic philosophy forward). But it is possible to construe the sentence in such a way that the term ἀντλήσις refers not to a cognitive act per se, but rather to a promised “exchange” of goods, clearly a late fifth-century BCE usage (e.g., Th. 1.120).

¹⁰⁹ E.g., in Xenophanes DK 21 B 2.19 and Solon fr. 4.32 West. For a comprehensive list of comparanda to Anonymus Iamblichi's defense of εὐνομία as against ἀνομία, see Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 177–81.

perspective on waking, which is directed towards pursuance of goods—those who have the proper respect for law will not dally in bed, in fear of what the day might bring. The goods guaranteed by respect for law, in turn, offer consolation for the day's hard work. Such a vision of respect for law (εὐνομία) is not in the strict service of aristocratic ideology, nor some sort of appeal to the archaic ancestral constitution (e.g., in the case of Lycurgan Sparta).¹¹⁰ In the context of what has been said about the excellent man's positive reputation and the bestowal of benefits on the majority, εὐνομία would appear to have transformed in this text into a democratic value.¹¹¹ Hence, it is worth comparing this defense of respect for law with a fragment of ps-Archytas' *On Law and Justice*:

Therefore, the law should be engrained in the characters and the pursuits of the citizens. For it will put the citizens in a self-sufficient condition and distribute the portion that falls to each in accordance with his worth. For, in this way too, the sun, being carried through the zodiac, distributes to all on earth the proper portion of birth, nutriment, and sustenance, by providing the good climate of the seasons as a good law (εὐνομία), as it were. (ps-Archyt. *On Law and Justice* fragment 4.e, p. 35.21–7 Thesleff)

Ps-Archytas approves of a scenario that makes it possible for individuals within the state to attain self-sufficiency as much as possible, a scenario that is analogous to the way the sun distributes the means to survival and the seasons as a εὐνομία in nature; and, as we find out in fragment 5 of *On Law and Justice*, this scenario would require a ruler/magistrate (ἄρχων) to be lawful (νόμιμος), which would require him to make correct judgments, assign proper punishments for crimes, and offer his services in accordance with the laws, which makes these activities align with reason.¹¹² Moreover, in that same fragment, laws are said to guarantee the rights of the ruler's subordinates. The excellent man of Anonymus Iamblichi's *On Excellence* provides a nice parallel to the ideal ruler/magistrate of ps-Archytas' *On Law and Justice*, as both realize their true purpose through the conferring of benefits upon the multitudes.

Where trust (πίστις) is lacking, human beings are far worse off than in a situation where it attends the respect for law: this is the case both in situations where good fortune holds sway or where bad fortune has once again reared its ugly head. The final fragment of Anonymus Iamblichi's *On Excellence*, fragment 8, appears to follow closely on what we saw in fragment 7, and its first half is tightly bound to it both thematically and argumentatively:

Humans¹¹³ become unable to spend time on their own activities and preoccupied with what is most unpleasant, political affairs (πράγματα), rather than private activities (ἔργα), and they hoard their money because of a lack of trust and social intercourse, and they do not share it, and hence money becomes scarce, even if it is abundant. Changes of fortune,

¹¹⁰ See Hdt. 1.65.

¹¹¹ Cf. Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo*, 163. Contrast the position of the roughly contemporary text of Old Oligarch ([Xen.] *Ath.* 1.8–9), who sees εὐνομία and democracy as irreconcilable.

¹¹² Ps-Archyt. *On Law and Justice* fr. 5, p. 36.2–10 Thesleff. See pp. 483–7 in this volume.

¹¹³ Excising from Anonymus Iamblichi *πρώτον*, which surely derives from Iamblichus' own attempts to explain what evils arise out of lack of respect for law (p. 102.24–5 Pistelli, τὰ δ' ἐκ τῆς ἀνομίας κακὰ ἀποβαίνοντα τὰδε ἐστίν·, would appear to be an Iamblichean transition; Laks and Most, *Sophists*, 158–9, are right to remove these lines from Diels' text).

for better or worse, render opposite consequences [than they would under a state of respect for law]:¹¹⁴ for good fortune is not secure in a state of lack of respect for law, but instead is subject to plots, whereas bad fortune is not cast off, but instead is reinforced by a lack of trust and social intercourse. External war is provoked all the more by this very cause [sc. lack of respect for law], as is internal strife; and if it hasn't erupted previously, it arises then. It [sc. internal strife] in political affairs happens to arise [for humans] always because of plots being hatched by one another, by reason of which they spend their lives being on guard and initiating counter-plots against one another. And, when they wake up, their concerns are not pleasant, nor when they go to sleep is their expectation pleasant, but rather it is riddled with terror; and his awakening, full of fear and alarm, leads a human to a sudden recollection of his evils; these, and the other aforementioned evils, are the result of lack of respect for law.

And tyranny, an evil of so great a magnitude and character, is a result of nothing other than lack of respect for law. Some people, who conjecture incorrectly, think that a tyrant comes to power from some other cause, and that humans deprived of their freedom are not themselves the causes of it, but [that they are deprived of their freedom] because they were forced by the tyrant once he has come to power. But their reasoning is incorrect; for whoever believes that a king or tyrant arises out of anything other than a lack of respect for law and greed is a fool. It is whenever all humans turn to baseness that this happens; for it is impossible for humans to thrive (ζῆν) without laws and justice. So when these two things, law and justice, relinquish the multitude (ἐκ τοῦ πλήθους ἐκλίπη), at that very time the administration and supervision of these things bid a retreat to a single man. For how else could sovereignty devolve to a single man, unless the law, which is beneficial to the multitude, is banished? This man, who will dismantle justice and abolish the law that is common and beneficial to all, needs to be made of adamantium, if he intends to strip the multitude of humans of these things – one man against many. But if he were to be made of flesh and similar to the rest [of humans], he would not have the capacity to do these things; on the contrary, only by re-establishing them when they have relinquished [viz. the multitude] could he attain sovereignty. That is the reason why it escapes the notice of some people when it [sc. a tyrant coming to power] happens.¹¹⁵ (*Anon. Iamb. DK 89* fragment 8 = *Iamb. Protr.* pp. 102.26–104.14 Pistelli)

In the first half of this fragment, Anonymus Iamblichi ventures an extensive critique of lack of respect for law (ἀνομία), exposing its close ties to strife, both internal (as civic conflict) and external (as war). When the instruments of good society, trust (πίστις) and social intercourse (ἐπιμυξία), are lost, the city is threatened by civil discord and external war, the latter of which is the worst thing human society is subject to. Again, and as we saw earlier, Anonymus Iamblichi focuses on the effects of social disruption on the individual: absence of respect for law eventuates deeply troubled sleep, paranoia, and petty desire for revenge.

Anonymus Iamblichi's insistence on the importance of these instruments of good society is remarkable and relatively unique within the context of late fifth-century Greek

¹¹⁴ Dillon and Gergel (*Sophists*, 317), correctly (in my opinion) draw the contrast with fr. 7 at p. 101.23–5 Pistelli. There is no need, *pace* Laks and Most (*Sophists*, 158, n. 1), to postulate a lacuna here.

¹¹⁵ It is possible that the lines that follow (p. 104.14–20 Pistelli) also derive from Anonymus Iamblichi, but I do not include them because the appeal to happiness (εὐδαιμονία) that follows does not relate to any of the content of the aforementioned fragments. Rather, it appears to be Iamblichus' inference.

culture. For comparison, in Gorgias' *Palamedes*, trust, once it has been lost, cannot be replaced:

Life is not livable for a man deprived of trustworthiness (βίος δὲ οὐ βιωτὸς πίστεως ἐστερημένῳ). For someone might be able to restore one who has lost his valuables, been deposed from tyranny, or been exiled from his fatherland; but someone who has lost trustworthiness (πίστιν ἀποβαλὼν) could never acquire it again. (Gorgias, *Palamedes* 21, DK 82 B 11a; trans. Laks and Most)

Elsewhere, in the *Funeral Oration*, Gorgias asserts that it is friendships that are properly respected through trustworthiness (πίστις).¹¹⁶ But, for the most part, it seems that Gorgias is concerned with the attainment of trustworthiness for the sake of interpersonal flourishing—he does not go as far as Anonymus Iamblichi who understands trust as a fundamental instrument for social stability. On the whole, trust itself is not usually counted by ancient thinkers as a mechanism of such great importance to the preservation of the democratic state and the individual who lives within it.¹¹⁷ From this perspective, Anonymus Iamblichi was the first figure to identify the deep importance of *trust* (both interpersonal and general) for the successful operation of democratic government—a commonplace assumption in political theory today.¹¹⁸

The surviving portion of Anonymus Iamblichi's *On Excellence* concludes with a rhetorical tour-de-force, a comprehensive rejection of lack of respect for law (ἀνομία).¹¹⁹ In this case, the Anonymus Iamblichi imagines what sorts of scenarios produce a tyrant, who would seek to annul the laws and expel justice from his regime. Some people, he says, erroneously believe that tyrannies arise from some cause other than lack of respect for law, and that it is the tyrant's power to strip individual freedom that sets them on the path of destruction; on the contrary, lack of respect for law, which entails the loss of individual freedom, is what produces the tyrant.¹²⁰ The question for Anonymus Iamblichi is what causes lack of respect for law: this is "baseness" (κακία) spread throughout the human population, the very same baseness that, back in fragment 3, is understood to be the opposite of excellence, and which implies the rejection of law and justice. When baseness is wrought over the people, law and justice are said almost poetically to "relinquish" them (ἐκλίπη), a distant echo of Hesiod's myth concerning the vicious men of the Iron Age, in which the goddesses of social benefaction, Shame (Αἰδώς) and Retribution (Νέμεσις), abandon (ἔτον προλιπόντ') men for Olympus, whereas Justice (Δίκη) alone remains to dish out the terrible deserts (*Op.* 175–224). Once this has happened, there is a power vacuum, and the tyrant is there to fill it, taking over the administering and supervision of

¹¹⁶ DK 82 B 6.

¹¹⁷ Mari (*Anonimo*, 277), attempts to show that trust ("fiducia") has a similar significance to Isocrates' idealized constitution in the *Areopagiticus* (33–5), but she overstates the case.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, the essays collected in M. E. Warren, *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹¹⁹ Mari (*Anonimo*, 318) notices the similarities to the Pythagorean tenet presented by Iamblichus (*VP* 171, p. 96.6–7 Deubner-Klein) of "lend assistance to law, and fight against lawlessness" (νόμῳ βοηθεῖν καὶ ἀνομία πολεμεῖν).

¹²⁰ It is difficult to know precisely who these people were; in the Constitutional Debate, Herodotus (3.82) has a group of Persian elites choose the next king, Darius; and this choice is confirmed through trickery (3.84–6). Contrary to both Anonymus Iamblichi and those figures he would debate, Plato holds (*R.* 8, 562a7–564a8) that tyranny emerges *precisely* from democratic freedom within the cycle of constitutions.

the justice system and the laws. He immediately sets out to dismantle the system of justice and to annul the laws that bequeath a common benefit to the multitude. If, so Anonymus Iamblichi asserts, that tyrant is anything less than a Superman, made of adamantium, he will surely fail, as one man ultimately cannot compete against many. The thought experiment involving the Superman comes to an abrupt end here, as all men are indeed made of flesh, and hence a tyrant, being violable, will achieve nothing if he does not institute law and justice once again and base his regime on them. So, too, Anonymus Iamblichi's text grounds to a halt, apparently leaving off *in medias res*, with no clear return to the issue of excellence. From the point of view of world politics in 2020, it is remarkable how prescient Anonymus Iamblichi's statements about the rise of a corrupt form of populism and the ascendancy of tyranny are, and the confidence with which the author asserts that the tyrant will be rendered wholly *ineffectual* in the absence of a robust support for law and justice. Political theorists today, who would seek to find wisdom in the ideas of the ancients, would do well to look beyond Plato's aristocratically inflected description of the rise of the tyrant in *Republic* 8, and to *On Excellence* of Anonymus Iamblichi, one of the only surviving philosophical defenses of democracy that survives from the ancient world.

5. Conclusions

Subsequent to quotation of these long stretches of Anonymus Iamblichi's *On Excellence*, Iamblichus reflects once again upon their value for his own project of exhortation to philosophy:

If, therefore, lack of respect for law is a cause of so great a number of bad things, and respect for law is so great a good, it is not possible to encounter happiness in any other way, unless someone were to assign law as authority for his own life (εἰ μὴ τις νόμον ἡγέμενα προστήσαιο τοῦ οἰκείου βίου). And this [sc. law] is right reason (λόγος ὀρθός), commanding what one ought to do, and forbidding what should not be done, in the whole cosmos, in city-states, in private homes, and for each individual himself in relation to himself. If, therefore, it is impossible to learn this kind of reason, which concerns good and bad things, and noble and shameful things (περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν ὄντα καὶ καλῶν καὶ αἰσχρῶν), in any other way, and to bring them, once they have been recognized, to perfection, unless one does philosophy perfectly, then it is for the sake of these things [sc. good and bad, and noble and shameful things] that one must practice (ἀσκητέον) philosophy to the greatest extent among human pursuits. (Iamb. *Protr.* 20, p. 104.14–25 Pistelli)

Iamblichus' finale nicely rounds up the material presented in the fragments of Anonymus Iamblichi by returning to his assertion, prior to the citation of fragment 1, that "it is not possible to learn these things without knowing virtue (ἀρετή), to which we refer both the capacity and the use of the laws, and proficiency in virtue obtains by means of philosophy, with the result that philosophy is an authority (ἡγεμών) in relation to this [sc. virtue] as well." For Iamblichus, law, which is right reason (λόγος ὀρθός), is to be an authority over human life; human life is regulated by law and laws, which can achieve their potential only

when virtue is present; and, finally, philosophy is the authority that provides guidance in relation to virtue.¹²¹ Hence, for Iamblichus, we have a chain of philosophical functions that binds theoretical to practical philosophy: philosophy is necessary for the attainment of virtue; virtue makes potent universal law, conceived of as right reason, and individual laws, in their applications; law and laws regulate human life; and the regulation of human life under law concerns good and fine things, which can be known and brought to their consummate forms only when philosophy is practiced (*ἀσκητέον*).

It becomes clear, then, that Iamblichus has integrated the arguments of *On Excellence* chiefly because they provide him with support for his case that there is a strong continuity between metaphysics and ethics. The distinctive emphasis on the practice (*ἄσκησις*) of excellence in Anonymus Iamblichi's text, which can only be associated in pre-Platonic philosophy with the thought of the Ionian philosophers Protagoras and Democritus, enables Iamblichus to project this continuity onto his exhortation to philosophy. This is a deft creative misreading of Anonymus Iamblichi's own arguments, which encourage not the practice of philosophy, but the development of the constituent parts of excellence (wisdom, courage, and eloquence). This process of appropriation has served very beneficial ends for scholars today: we possess a lost text that can (with some reliability) be dated to classical Greece, which presents a unique philosophical view on excellence (*ἀρετή*) and its parts; which advances a defense of law and justice by appealing to both value and instrumental reasoning; which carefully differentiates between nature and fortune; which provides an early reflection upon social emotions, the weaknesses of the human condition, and the nature of true power; which develops the first substantial "Superman" thought experiment; and which, finally, develops the earliest extant and most philosophically sustained defense of democracy and the democratic social order, almost wholly unattested in ancient Greek philosophical literature. For these reasons alone, *On Excellence* of Anonymus Iamblichi should be integrated into scholarly discussions of ancient Greek democracy and its ideology, alongside more famous passages such as Otañes' speech in the Persian Constitutional Debate (Hdt. 3.80–2), Pericles' Funeral Oration (Th. 2.34–42), and Theseus' speech in Euripides' *Suppliants* (Il. 426–62). Simply because we do not know for sure who its author was, this does not mean *On Excellence* does not feature forceful and impressive philosophical arguments for why law and justice, which are guaranteed by the cultivation of civic excellence (*ἀρετή*), must be preserved and supported, if the citizens who live in a democratic regime, and the democratic regime itself, are to flourish.¹²²

¹²¹ At the end of *On Wisdom* (fr. 5, p. 45.1–4 Thesleff = Iamb. *Protr.* 4, p. 23.1–5 Pistelli), ps-Archytas claims that someone who sets out to pursue philosophy "will set out and arrive at the end of the course, connecting the beginnings with the conclusions, and finding out why god is the beginning, end, and middle of all the things-that-are defined in accordance with justice and right reason" (*κατὰ δίκαν τε καὶ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον*). The latter phrase would seem to be euphemistic for "law" (*νόμος*). For the Stoic concept of *ὀρθὸς λόγος* and its origins in Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, see generally J. Moss, "Right Reason in Plato and Aristotle: On the Meaning of *Logos*," *Phronesis* 59 (2014), 181–230.

¹²² With this paper, I fulfil a promise made to Monte Ransome Johnson almost a decade ago to write a "comprehensive" treatment of Anonymus Iamblichi in English. Since he has been the initial impetus for the writing of this chapter, thanks go to him first and foremost. Further thanks go to Giulia De Cesaris and Ben Harriman for support, P. J. Rhodes for a keen eye, and David Wolfsdorf for encouragement and suggestions for improvement.

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