

Narrow vs Broad Protagoreanism

Protagoras believes the following claims ('p' stands for a proposition):

1. If it seems to x that p, then it is true for x that p.
2. If it is true for x that p, then it seems to x that p.

The conjunction of 1 and 2 is the official Protagorean doctrine:

Protagoreanism: It seems to x that p if and only if it is true for x that p

The *scope* of this doctrine is unclear, i.e., it is unclear what range of values can be substituted for x and p.

Narrow Protagoreanism: a) x is any individual organism with at least one of the five senses, and b) p is restricted to any proposition about what is perceived with the five senses, e.g., 'the cat is wet', 'the chair is blue', 'the drum beat is quick', etc.

Broad Protagoreanism: a) x is any entity whatsoever that can somehow hold a belief, b) p is any proposition whatsoever.

Socrates argues that Protagoras refutes himself, where the target of that refutation is Broad Protagoreanism (BP). But the refutation of BP does not undermine Narrow Protagoreanism (NP). Socrates assumes that Protagoras might respond by restricting NP to things that seem to individuals warm, dry, sweet, etc., and seem to cities admirable and shameful, just and unjust, pious and impious, and religious and not religious. But he suggests that Protagoras would concede that NP does not apply to what seems to an individual healthy or sickening, and to a city what is or is not in its best interest.

Digression

The dialog takes a sudden and mysterious turn. Socrates says at 172c that these concessions are made even by non-Protagoreans, that is, the concessions that there are expertise in respect of health for the body and soul, and expertise in respect of what is in the best interest of the state. But Socrates does not continue the discussion. Instead, he turns to compare the lawyer/orator with the philosopher. He concludes that discussion at 177c by claiming that the comparison was a digression. Interpreters are at a loss as to why Plato included this discussion. Some claim that it is irrelevant and could be removed without any losses. Others have claimed that it does play an important role in the discussion, but they disagree what role it plays. Our goal is to figure out ways that it might be relevant. The key likely lies in Socrates' claim that for Protagoras "whatever view a city takes on these matters and establishes as its law or convention, is truth and fact for the city." (172a) The lawyer and orator are versed in the laws and conventions of a city. What else might we say?

Write out the most relevant differences between the lawyer and philosopher