II.—THE HUMANISM OF PROTAGORAS.

BY F. C. S. SCHILLER.

MR. C. M. GILLESPIE's interesting article in No. 76 is a valuable contribution to the important question how far the absolutism of Plato can be regarded as a successful reply to the relativism of the fifth century B.C., and marks a great advance in the discussion. It is highly significant that an academically trained writer should undertake to inquire into the real position of those who have had the honour to be misrepresented by Plato, and still more so that his inquiry should result in so extensive a revision of what has commonly been believed. Mr. Gillespie in fact reduces the dimensions of Plato's victory over relativism to quite moderate and reasonable proportions, and evinces an eminently sane and sound judgment on philosophic controversies which posterity has hitherto been far too content to view as mirrored in the *mirage* of Platonic eloquence. A less exacting zealot for the whole truth than myself would therefore doubtless profess himself satisfied with Mr. Gillespie's revision of the tradition. But the issue is so important and Mr. Gillespie has associated me with it so closely that I can hardly decline to comment on the new situation.

In my previous discussion of the topic in *Studies in Humanism* (ch. ii. and xiii.-xv.), *Plato or Protagoras?* and *MIND* (No. 68), I had attempted to disestablish the naïve belief that Plato had for ever disposed of all relativism in the *Theatetus*, (1) by drawing attention to certain neglected *facts*, and (2) by constructing a *theory* which would give as reasonable an explanation of them as the scantiness of the whole evidence permitted.

The point of departure for this theory was the remarkable fact that it is impossible to find in the *Theatetus* any adequate and complete confutation of the speech which 'Socrates' makes on behalf of Protagoras in 166-168. That this difficulty exists was admitted by the high authority of Prof. Burnet in his review of my pamphlet,¹ and is con-

¹ No. 67, p. 422.

firmed by Mr. Gillespie, who admits that "as against the doctrine that man has no *interpres naturæ* except himself the (Platonic) argument has, of course, no force" (p. 490 *s.f.*). It may therefore be taken as conceded fact. It must moreover be taken in connexion with other facts about Plato's criticism of Protagoreanism, which I have enumerated in *Plato or Protagoras?* and in No. 68 (pp. 523-524), concerning the way in which an understanding of Protagoras's philosophic importance grows upon Plato in his later dialogues, and in connexion with the difficulty Plato perceives (in the *Theætetus* itself) about avoiding Protagoreanism, unless a satisfactory theory of error can be constructed.¹ There exist also ancient traditions about the persecution of Protagoras under the oligarchy of the Four Hundred in 411 B.C., and the destruction of his books by the Athenians at the instigation of Pythodorus, and of his consequent flight and death, and it harmonises well with these traditions that none of the subsequent Greek philosophers seem to have any first-hand knowledge of Protagoras, and that Plato seems to be the ultimate source of all their information. Lastly, it is a curious fact that although the dicta about 'man the measure' and the gods are universally assigned to Protagoras, our knowledge of their context is a total blank, and there exist in consequence great differences of opinion as to their real meaning.

It is clear, therefore, that the materials for reconstructing the authentic structure of Protagoreanism are extremely scanty, and it follows that any theory which is adopted must rely largely on its intrinsic coherence and plausibility and the facility with which it covers the facts.

Now the particular theory I ventured to propound starts by suggesting that the philosophy of Protagoras was the outcome of his life-long experience as a teacher and observer. No one could wander up and down the Greek world in the fifth century B.C. without noticing the discrepancies between the morals and mythologies of the different States,² and the enormous variations of individual opinion, taste and even sensibility.³ Nor could he ignore the manifold signs that the popular recognition of this same variability of human affairs was leading to a widespread breakdown of customary morality, and producing the social *débâcles* so graphically described by Thucydides. As a thoughtful man Protagoras would surely try to understand the causes of a moral de-

¹ *Plato or Protagoras?* p. 25.

² Cf. *Studies in Humanism*, pp. 311, 342-343.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 316-319.

cadence which he was professionally bound to cure. As to these causes he appears to have come to different conclusions in the case of morals and of theology. The contradictions of current mythologies were so great that theology was hopeless; it was no use wasting time in trying to find out the truth about the gods. But the moral problem seemed more soluble, if one had the courage to face the facts, which were paradoxical enough. In point of fact what constituted the moral order everywhere and enforced it on the individual, was social opinion, and in a sense therefore morality was always νόμος, a matter of social convention. Nor were there any definite or even visible limits to the authority of society. Anything might be ordained as καλόν or δίκαιον and the queerest customs did in fact prevail. Yet it was equally indisputable that every individual had his idiosyncrasy, and that no amount of social pressure could enable him to see things in any but his own individual way. It was as useless, for example, to insist that the short-sighted man must see as clearly as the keen-sighted, or that the colour-blind must see as red what he saw as grey, as to persuade the sick man to taste as sweet what in fact tasted to him bitter.

How then could these two facts be rendered compatible? It would not do to declare either that the social order or that the individual's judgment was infallible. If the one were, progress, if the other, education, would become impossible, and in the second of these at least Protagoras was doubtless a fervent believer. At last Protagoras found a way out of the difficulty. He announced that man was the measure of all things. This was to assert man's spiritual autonomy, both against the physiologists and against the theologians, and recognised also, in a thoroughly democratic spirit, the autonomy of every individual citizen. But the principle had to be formulated with discretion. So far it was no solution of the conflict between social opinion and private judgment; for though in different references it vindicated both, it did not resolve the cases of conflict between them. If it was merely democratic and merely asserted that one man's judgment was as good as another man's, it might easily prove subversive, and aggravate the spiritual unrest it was designed to heal, besides reducing to absurdity the honourable professions of the educator and the statesman. Clearly, moreover, no one in his senses could seriously contend that one man's judgment was in every respect as good as another man's. It is certain, therefore, that Protagoras cannot have stopped

short with the bare Dictum. He must have sought a way of testing and standardising the 'measurements' of different individuals, in order to give to his dictum any scientifically and socially applicable meaning at all. But if he sought, is it not possible that he found? Yet if he found a solution, where shall we find it?

Surely the obvious place to look for it is in Plato. Only the stupidest or most unscrupulous controversialists succeed in utterly obliterating the meaning of the views they controvert. And who will call Plato either stupid or unscrupulous? In this case, moreover, what has a strong *prima facie* claim to be part at least of the missing context stares us in the face. Plato gives us an eloquent defence of Protagoras, which professes to be authentic, which conforms to every criterion of authenticity we can apply, which makes good sense, and is internally coherent. If then we are willing to accept the Protagoras-Speech in the *Theatetus* as authentic, we shall have to dismiss as groundless all speculation as to what the *Homo Mensura* might have meant in the abstract, and to recognise that Protagoras's actual expedient for giving a practical meaning to his dictum is known. It consisted simply in this, that though he admitted that each man's truth was 'true' for him, and remained so however much his opinions changed, he did *not* infer that all 'truths' were equally 'good'. I.e. while he admitted that the psychic self-evidence of personal experience was irrefragable, he strenuously disputed that this fact equalised the *value* of all human experiences. The judgments and perceptions of some might yet be immeasurably 'better' than those of others, and these would be the true experts, who could guide the erring steps of communities and individuals. Among such experts Protagoras had good reason to include himself.

The Speech thus answers the three main difficulties which the Protagorean dictum set itself to solve, and might seem an ample context to one to whom the dictum came merely as a floating paradox. But it can hardly be denied that it forms rather a scanty setting for so big a principle, and that scientifically it suggests questions which it does not answer. How is the conflict between a man's successive 'truths' to be interpreted? Is it enough merely to suggest a practical escape from facts which seem so subversive of the belief in the consistency of truth? If one view, though not 'truer,' can be 'better' than another, in what ways can it be ascertained *which* is the better view? How can a view's 'goodness' influence its 'truth'? Why is it that the 'good' can thus make and unmake the 'true'? Again, do not men

differ as much in their views of the 'good' as of the 'true'? Is not the subjectivity of individual judgments even more apparent here, and the difficulty of educing objectivity just as great?

The silence of the Speech leaves us to answer by conjectures. Did Protagoras really draw a hard and fast line between the 'true' and the 'good'? May he not have had an inkling that the 'true' was a value too? If so, would he not require a common method for passing from individual judgments to social conventions in both cases, and for evaluating divergent customs? Was he not empiricist enough to appeal to the experience of the differential *consequences of acting* on the various 'truths' believed, even if he was not biologist enough to account for the selection and objectivity of the 'better' truths by their greater survival value?

It is unlikely that none of these questions occurred in any form to the mind of Protagoras. But, if they did, it is clear that his answers are not recorded. The Speech therefore may be authentic, but it is not complete, Protagoreanism. Why is it incomplete? Is it the fault of Protagoras or of Plato? The former could hardly have avoided reflection upon some of the further problems which his position (as stated) entailed, whereas the latter was not compelled (or perhaps was not able), to make his exposition complete. But if Plato knew the complete doctrine, the mere fact that he is reporting it does not excuse its incompleteness. Surely he was not cramped for space and might have given us more of the reasons, and less of the moral indignation,¹ of Protagoras. The Speech reads like that of an injured man, too angry to state his case in full.

It begins and ends with rebuke, and only the centre of it is exposition (166 D-167 C), incisive and to the point, but manifestly not the whole story. But Plato is no doubt capable of any amount of the dramatic art he condemns so harshly. And also perhaps of mutilating and misrepresenting an opponent's position? No, that must not be said. What then? Why did his Speech leave so many unsolved questions? Shall it be said that he extracted only the essential points? Was Plato, then, so lacking in perception that he did not see the importance of what he had omitted? Shall it be said that he misunderstood, or did not know the whole? But surely he, if any one, was in a position to know what Protagoras had really meant. Aye, he, *if any one*; but *did* he know?

This suggests that we have so far strangely omitted to

¹ 166 A-C, 167 D-168 B.

inquire how and when Plato may be supposed to have got to know the doctrine of Protagoras. Did he read his book as a boy when it first came out, and before it was suppressed? That does not seem very probable. Or did he read it late in life, just before he composed the *Theaetetus*, and had he until then known Protagoreanism only from hearsay? That again does not sound probable. If, when he composed the *Protagoras* he was acquainted with its hero's books and had grasped the ethical significance of his doctrine, why does he betray no knowledge of the *ἄνθρωπος μέτρον*? And why does so mature a student and so expert an analyst not give us more of the Protagorean reasonings, when he does show knowledge of their existence? Because his eyes were prejudiced by the (? ignorant) attack on the Dictum committed in the *Cratylus*? If that is more credible, it is hardly more creditable. And if the Speech is Plato's *amende honorable*, why is it prefaced with scurrilities about swine and dog-faced baboons quite in his earlier style?¹ And why does not the Platonic reply thereafter ignore his earlier misconceptions, stick to the argument of the Speech and pulverise that? It does the very opposite. Again, why hesitate so long to strike the deadly blow, and take refuge in all sorts of irrelevancies, digressions and inaccuracies? And, above all, why ignore in your confutation the very gist of the reply, the very pertinent distinction between truth and value, by which Protagoreanism had seemed to escape from its vulgar travesties? Why leave it in doubt whether your confutation is relevant at all?

If Plato knew and understood it all and possessed a crushing refutation, his tactics are passing strange. But is it conceivable that his *knowledge* was imperfect? Well, of course it is, if we do not arbitrarily reject the story of the downfall of Protagoras. What if the oligarchic persecution did in fact successfully suppress the written records of the pestilent enlightenment of the chief instructor of the Periclean democracy? The number of copies of the dangerous book would be small, and they would mostly be in the possession of persons in the best society, sympathetic with the new *régime*, and willing to sacrifice an ex-tutor's theories to the pressing demands of political life. The book of Protagoras may well have perished thus. His doctrine after that would survive only in the memory of his friends, and be cherished with that of the man. But human memory is evanescent, and the details would fade, or would never have been grasped.

¹ *Theaet.*, 161 B.

Still when groundless and grotesque attacks were made on the true doctrine under academic auspices, might not a man like Theodorus well grow indignant, and expostulate with the author of such treatment? Does not this account for his entry into the *Theatetus*? Is the Speech, in substance, the protest of Theodorus against the outrageous travesty of the Dictum in the *Cratylus*, and did Plato store it up for future use, and bring it out again, years afterwards, in the *Theatetus*? There is nothing in the known facts which excludes this theory and much that supports it. It is a hypothesis, but it explains all the facts in a simple and adequate manner.

But it is comprehensible that some should think it too radical a breach with the tradition. Mr. Gillespie also will not accept it in its integrity, and tries to construct a *via media* between it and the traditional interpretation. His procedure is ingenious.

(1) He agrees with a good deal of the new view. He agrees that the Dictum of Protagoras covers 'man' both generically and individually (pp. 480, 483), that it had reference to the moral crisis of the time (p. 481) and that Protagoras was an empiricist (pp. 472, 492), though he does not suggest also that his empiricism originated in first-hand experience. He agrees also that Protagoreanism was not primarily directed either against the Eleatics or against the mathematicians (pp. 477, 478). He agrees that the Speech is intended to state the authentic doctrine of Protagoras (p. 471). He agrees that the fusion of Protagoreanism with sensationalism is a combination of Plato's (p. 472).¹ Lastly, he concedes also, though reluctantly, that the Speech is *not* completely confuted in the sequel. Plato "ignores the element of utility" in his reply (p. 485), and "directs his rejoinder entirely against the relativism of the Dictum" (*ibid.*), and does nothing to confute the contention that man is an ineradicable factor in human experience (*cf.* p. 490 *s.f.* and 491).

But (2) on Mr. Gillespie's theory of the Speech this *lacuna* does not matter. For Plato, not the 'pragmatism,' but the 'relativism,' of Protagoras was the enemy, and this he does assail and confute, *as he understands it*² (pp. 487, 488). Or if he does not quite succeed, he does so "virtually" (p. 488).³ As for the other incidents in the argument to which exception had been taken, the verbalities and irrelevancies and in-

¹ *Cf. Studies in Humanism*, p. 310.

² Italics mine.

³ Plato himself is not so cautious, but (falsely) claims to have shown that Protagoras's truth could not be true *even to him*: *cf.* 171 C.

accuracies,¹ the unfairnesses and harkings-back to misconstructions superseded by the Speech, the 'dialectical' character of the argument covers all that (p. 491). So criticisms of such procedures "have not the least foundation in fact" (p. 489). Whoever thinks that Plato's sole business, after setting up so strong a defence of Protagoras must have been to knock it down again as speedily and effectively as possible, is gravely mistaken. In the reply Plato is most of the time not dealing with the authentic argument of Protagoras at all. He is diverting himself 'dialectically,' discovering affinities between Protagoras and Heraclitus (p. 472) or "condemning the polemical methods" of *other* critics (the 'swine-baboon' methods) who "made game of the Dictum as an abstract principle," without regard to its context (pp. 472, 488, 492)—by the somewhat curious method of repeating their abuse in his own superior language. Or again (p. 487) he is showing that common-sense had obvious objections (which, as obviously fell short of the real doctrine of Protagoras), or exhibiting the reluctance of certain (imaginary) sages to apply the Dictum consistently all round (p. 489). In short, the argument is full of interludes and anything rather than a straight fight to the finish between Platonism and the authentic doctrine of Protagoras.

(3) Mr. Gillespie's theory greatly restricts the scope of the problem. It deals only with the relation of the Protagoras-Speech to the criticism which follows. It is in no sense a general theory of the relations of Platonism to Protagoreanism. It does not even involve a general view of the structure of the *Theatetus*. It renders the Speech and its 'refutation' a mere episode which is not organically connected with the whole argument, and neither arises out of what has preceded nor leads on to what follows.

On my theory, on the other hand, the connexions are clear. The first attack on Protagoreanism is a repetition of the

¹ Mr. Gillespie is mistaken in his account of the argument based on these (*Plato or Protagoras?* pp. 21-23). It was not my contention that the Speech contained the *ipsissima verba* of Protagoras (p. 485). It is not even essential to my point that it should contain the *ipsissima verba* of Theodorus. I merely pointed out that it is very strange that there should be discrepancies between the Speech and the subsequent references to it, on the theory of a Platonic authorship of its substance, while if its source was Protagorean (Theodorus) *small* discrepancies might creep in. I also pointed out that though they were verbally small, they implied a profound misconception of the sense of the Speech: And in any case does not the Protagorean substance of the Speech (which Mr. Gillespie admits) sufficiently account for the 'dual personality' I am censured for ascribing to the author of the *Theatetus* (p. 485 n.)?

grossly unfair misconceptions of the *Cratylus*. The charge is that it cannot discriminate between a good judgment and a bad. Any ape's judgment is as true and as good¹ as that of Protagoras himself. 'Pardon me,' Protagoras is made to reply, 'as "true" was what I said, taking true in a technical sense in which the term is restricted to truth-claims, but never, surely, as "good".' This is the only relevant reply, and adequate to the only charge advanced. How Mr. Gillespie can think (pp. 474, 485) that it is *not* the central feature of the Speech, but something to be ignored with impunity, I fail to understand. Even verbally the point is made as emphatic as the Greek language will allow (167 B). ἀ δὴ τινες τὰ φαντάσματα ὑπὸ ἀπειρίας ἀληθῆ καλοῦσιν, ἐγὼ δὲ βελτίω μὲν τὰ ἕτερα τῶν ἐτέρων, ἀληθέστερα δὲ οὐδέν. That surely dissociates 'Protagoras' sharply from the uncritical persons who could be crushed by 'swine-baboon' methods of criticism. No one who read the Speech for the first time, with a mind unprejudiced by Plato's subsequent polemics and innocent of the disputes about 'relativism,' could fail to be struck with the fact that the distinction between the 'true' and the 'good' is the 'nerve' of the argument, regarding it as a reply to what has gone before.

But what of what follows after? What of the reply to the Speech? Certainly that too may throw light on its meaning. But on Mr. Gillespie's theory it becomes a farrago of digressions and irrelevancies and appeals to side issues, which never, on his own showing, amounts to a complete answer. From a logical point of view Plato's reply is inadequate, and from a literary it is bad workmanship.

On my theory also it is no answer; but it was not intended to be. Plato did not attempt a *direct* answer to what was unanswerable. So he gives us a masterly attempt to conceal the fact that no answer was forthcoming, so masterly indeed that for over 2000 years it has served its purpose and persuaded mankind that it was an entirely successful answer. It is a triumph of art; and this is a sufficient explanation and vindication of its dialectical windings.

And lastly, how is the whole Protagoras episode logically connected with the discussion of Error which follows? Simply enough: if the doctrine of Protagoras (as understood by Plato) is false, and if it is not true that all truth-claims are alike 'true,' some of them must be false while yet claiming to be 'true'. It becomes imperative therefore to discriminate between true 'truths' and false. Now the essence of Error is to take as 'true' what is 'false'; hence the possibility of

¹ 'No worse' would be more literal: cf. 162 C.

Error must be explained, if the 'Protagorean' identification of truth and truth-claim, which abolishes Error as such, is repudiated. If no satisfactory theory of Error can be found, the result is simply a relapse into Protagoreanism, as Plato (after several failures) candidly hints.¹

On Mr. Gillespie's theory no such connexion can be traced. Nor can anything intelligible be made of the lack of all reference to the Dictum in Plato's mentions of Protagoras before the *Cratylus*, and of the ignorance of the other Greek philosophers on the subject of Protagoras. There is no account of how the Speech came to be authentic; Mr. Gillespie merely states that he does not accept my suggestions (p. 470 n.). Nay, even the most proximate and germane questions have to be passed over lightly. The delicate question whether Plato had read the author he was criticising is regarded as settled by a remark of 'Theætetus' in the dialogue that he had (p. 471). But what else could Plato plausibly make him say? The Speech is supposed to epitomise Protagoras's *magnum opus*, but in order to explain why it is so unlike a cold-blooded epitome, alike in the conciseness of its reasoning and the fullness of its indignation, it is necessary to suppose that less than half of it is really an epitome, and that Plato needed most of it in order to express his reprobaton of the unfair ('swine-baboon') methods of the ignorant critics, whose attack on the bare Dictum he had put so effectively in 161 C, and was going to endorse again in 169 D-E, after he had set aside the whole Speech (p. 473). This explanation seems improbable; but it is perhaps better than nothing.

(4) It would seem then that Mr. Gillespie's theory does not cover the whole ground. It neither (1) accounts for all the facts, nor (2) does it account for those it notices very simply. Nor (3) does it redound to the honour of Plato. It no doubt makes him out a great 'dialectician,' but only if the translation of 'dialectician' into plain English is taken to be something like 'dishonest trickster'. Now I am aware that history shows that the word 'dialectic' is very elastic and can be made to cover any number of philosophic sins, but surely there are limits to its fashionable use as a euphemism for a bad argument. We must not get into the habit of thinking that gross irrelevance, unfairness, and improbability are promptly sanctified by applying to them the word 'dialectical'. Elsewhere, e.g. in the first book of the *Republic*, Plato shows that he can handle 'dialectic' quite differently. And

¹ 190 E. Cf. *Plato or Protagoras?* pp. 25-28. I have argued elsewhere that this is the logical position of rationalism to this day.

in particular Mr. Gillespie's suggestion (p. 473) that the protests 'Protagoras' makes against the captious criticism, to which his dictum has been subjected in the 'swine-baboon' passage, is expressive of *Plato's own* abhorrence of this great Socratic art, is a severe strain on the most amiable credulity. With every willingness, therefore, to allow for varying estimates of the probabilities of internal evidence, I cannot see that Mr. Gillespie gets round the main fact that on my interpretation the Speech is a straightforward and effective answer to the most obvious and effective objection to the Dictum, whereas on his theory it is not, and the ensuing criticism, whether 'dialectical' or not, is incomplete and ineffective.

(5) Moreover, it does not seem as though Mr. Gillespie's theory admitted of being stated either (a) with a due regard to the facts, or (b) in a wholly consistent manner. It requires him at times to make assertions which are clearly untenable and to come very near contradicting himself.

(a) He could hardly substantiate the assertion on page 481 that on Protagorean principles a judgment "*does not claim to be true except for the maker*". Not only is this not asserted by Protagoras, but it denies the real crux of the situation. If subjective experience were content to be merely subjective, it would lead to no conflict with other similar but incompatible judgments, and would produce no problem. It is precisely because all men and all societies think their own views true, because the *claim* of the judgment is universal, that there is trouble. For these claims cannot all be valid together. They must somehow be selected from to form a rational system and a social order. If Protagoras perceived this, as his distinction between the 'truth' and the 'goodness' of an opinion plainly shows, it cannot be correct to say that "he laid no claim to superior wisdom" (p. 481); and accordingly in 166 D Plato makes him say that one man's judgment may differ ten-thousand-fold from another man's. Moreover, in 167 C it is implied, and in 167 D it is explained, that the 'better' judges may properly be called 'wiser'.

Nor again does Mr. Gillespie's exegesis of the Protagorean philosophy of politics seem to accord either with the text of 167 C or with the logic of the doctrine. The case of a city which takes a 'worse' view of the just is precisely parallel to that of the individual who takes a 'worse' view of the true: in either case there is need for the expert, the speaker or teacher, who can make them take a 'better' view. Again

there is no 'restriction' of the *claim*, though there is of the *validity*, of the individual judgment.¹

Lastly, it does not seem satisfactory to translate the *ἀγαθόν* of the Speech by 'utility' rather than 'value,' and Mr. Gillespie should not have let the use of *συμφέρον* in the Platonic reply colour his translation of the text of the Speech. He surely would not translate the *Ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* as the 'Idea of Utility'?²

(b) It seems difficult to harmonise Mr. Gillespie's views about the substance of the Protagoras-Speech. He began (p. 471) by agreeing that its matter was authentic. Yet on page 485 he censures me, for inferring from this same premiss that some notice must be taken of the wording of the Speech, and insists that as this is by (or *in*?) Plato, it constitutes no independent evidence of the meaning of Protagoras. In the next paragraph he again holds that the Speech substantially reproduces views of Protagoras in the language of Plato. If so, why may we not take account of the emphatic passage in 167 B?

Again, is Mr. Gillespie's apologia for Plato's polemical procedure really adequate? He holds that Plato considered the 'pragmatism' in the Speech to be so secondary to the 'relativism' that he confined his attentions wholly to the latter. But even granting (as I cannot do) that this is a

¹ Mr. Gillespie's conception of the relations of *claim* and *validity* does not seem quite clear. The remark (p. 483) referred to should run "this doctrine implied a restriction of the *claim* of the moral judgment". But it is not true, either in Protagoras or in fact, that it "does not *claim* to be valid" beyond each social group. On p. 486 he, more correctly, represents the Platonic 'Protagoras' as asserting the identity of 'claim' and 'validity'. But this seems inconsistent with the passage on p. 481.

² There are a good many slips, mostly of a minor kind, in Mr. Gillespie's exposition of my views, and he by no means meets all my arguments. But I will only refer to his initial misconception that I regard the Protagoras of the *Theaetetus* as enunciating "the fundamental principle of Pragmatism" (which is that the truth of assertions must be tested by their consequences). This principle certainly does not occur in the text. What does occur is the suggestion that a question of its 'good' (or value) may be raised about a 'truth' (or fact). As the doctrine stands this is *not* a "subsumption of truth under the concept of utility" (p. 479), nor is it my own view, because it does *not* recognise a distinction between claim and validity in the realm of truth-value; but it is something noteworthy and quite unique in ancient philosophy. I carefully pointed all this out (*Plato or Protagoras?* pp. 17-18; *Studies*, p. 36). But I also doubted whether the Platonic account, being probably at second-hand, could on this point be trusted, and hinted that Protagoras may really have gone further. The real and undisputed feat by which Protagoras earned the right to be called a humanist, is of course the discovery of the *Homo Mensura* itself, and it is this that I regard as his "central doctrine".

proper interpretation of the text of the Speech, does this really make the reply relevant? The relativism of the Speech was nothing *new*, like its pragmatism. The bare Dictum affirmed it. It could have been and was criticised without introducing the Speech at all, and in fact it continues to be criticised as though the Speech had never been made. The other new points in the Speech are ignored similarly,¹ and such minor points as are referred to are misconstrued.² As a *new* document, therefore, in the case the Speech is quite inoperative, and for all the logical difference it makes might have been eliminated altogether.

How then can my contention that Plato's reply ignores the Speech be said to have "not the least foundation" (p. 489)? On Mr. Gillespie's own showing, it has abundant foundation. A distinct, and the essentially new, point in the Speech is ignored, when it is admitted that the reply is "directed entirely against the relativism of the dictum" (p. 485). And to urge that "if Plato in his defence treated the element of utility as being secondary and ignored it in his reply we have no right . . . to regard it as primary" (*ibid.*), is manifestly to beg the question. However much estimates of the relative importance of factors in an argument may differ, Mr. Gillespie cannot get round the fact that the 'new facts' in the Speech are not examined at all, and that therefore the Speech is *not* completely answered.

And in the end he admits this himself. What Plato refutes is not 'man the measure' but 'man the maker' of the world (pp. 490-491). But this is ultra-modern, and who ever attributed to Protagoras a belief that man is "the complete *magister natura*," and "the sole arbiter of his destiny"? Certainly not Plato, and certainly not I.³

Lastly, I cannot extract any really consistent meaning out of Mr. Gillespie's views of the Protagorean attitude towards truth-claims and their value and validity. The dicta which a student of his theory has to harmonise are these: (1) "Protagoras is made to assert degrees of value and deny degrees of truth" (p. 479); (2) Protagoreanism implies "a restriction of the validity of the moral judgment. The moral judgment does not *claim* to be valid beyond the sphere of the social group which forms it" (pp. 483-484); (3) Protagoras does not "see that the judgment claims a universal validity" (p. 484); (4) he "draws a distinction between a belief and its value; so do we all" (p. 486); (5) 'Protagoras' does *not* state

¹ *Plato or Protagoras?* p. 18.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

³ *Cf. Studies*, pp. 320-321.

that the 'value' of a belief gives it 'validity,' but regards truth and utility (goodness) as conceptions with no point of contact (p. 486); (6) to Plato's 'Protagoras' "belief and validity are the same" (p. 488, *cf.* p. 486); (7) "there is no justification whatever for the view that Protagoras taught that truth is a 'value' or any similar Pragmatist doctrine" (p. 492). Of these dicta No. 1 seems to me to be true, and Nos. 2, 3, and 7 to be false, while Nos. 4, 5, and 6 seem seriously misleading. But it seems clear that the first and the last implicitly contradict each other. For if the Platonic 'Protagoras' asserts 'degrees of value' among 'truths,' he clearly brings 'truth' and value into connexion, and it becomes imperative to consider also how the real Protagoras may have conceived the relations of truth and value. Hence there is at least a possibility that he not only described 'truths' as *differing in 'goodness,'* but as *sorts of 'goodness'.* But this possibility was not asserted by me as a certainty.

The fourth and sixth dicta similarly seem to be incompatible; for if Protagoras *identified* belief (claim) and validity in judgments that claim 'truth,' how could he *distinguish* between a belief and its value, seeing that it is only by the approved value of a claim that its validity is established? The way from a belief which is as yet a mere claim to its acknowledged validity lies through experience of its value, and if validity is conceded to a claim, *a fortiori* value must be. To make Mr. Gillespie's dicta intelligible it is necessary to add that whereas 'validity' is used in a logical sense only, 'value' is ambiguous, and may be either logical or teleological (moral). Now 'value' is used in its teleological sense in the first dictum and in the logical sense in the fifth, while in the fourth and seventh it is used ambiguously. The simple truth of course is that Plato's 'Protagoras' makes teleological value or 'goodness' the criterion for discriminating between conflicting truth-claims, and that to this extent he does *not* identify 'claim' and 'validity,' though he allows all claims to retain the label 'true,' which however no longer retains its traditional meaning, just because the distinction between truth (claim) and value has been introduced. This distinction is quite unparalleled in Greek philosophy, and it seems strange to conceive it as *denying* a point of contact between truth and value (*cf.* No. 5); to make the 'good' control the 'true' is surely to bring them into a closer relation than they were in before and to deny that they are utterly irrelevant to each other, even though it does not amount to making truth a sort of value. Mr. Gillespie's account fastens on the technical point that truth is not expressly called a

value, and overlooks the enormous advance involved in finding any connexion at all between the two conceptions. My theory recognised the great originality of the 'Protagoras' of the Speech, and suggested that the real Protagoras must have had reasons to go further still; Mr. Gillespie's has to blind itself to the existence of any novelty at all, and has no excuse for this arbitrary procedure but Plato's artful avoidance of the novelties in the Speech.

Finally, I will try to explain an argument in my pamphlet (p. 23) which Mr. Gillespie finds obscure (p. 491), and has in fact failed to apprehend. It refers to what I called the 'compromise' offered to the Protagorean principle in 172 A-B. It was to be admitted that what a city affirms in its laws as 'just' and 'beautiful' is to be regarded as such 'in truth,' but that nevertheless it may be no judge of what is 'advantageous'. Now it is clear that this proposal is incompatible with thorough-going Protagoreanism, and forms a thoroughly illogical compromise which tries to slur over the real crux, *viz.* that though cities have the power to give social currency to their estimates of the just and virtuous, and no individual can gainsay them, yet the laws they enact may nevertheless be bad and wrong, and ultimately ruinous. On my theory this fact had formed one of the data which the Protagorean theory was designed to explain. The explanation, as given in 167 C, I took to be that States needed expert advisers ('rhetors') as much as individuals, and that the true statesman's advice was more valuable and so capable of reforming the existing laws. Consequently the genuine Protagoreanism of the Speech cannot make a distinction between what a city thinks about the 'just' and about the 'advantageous'. In both cases what it thinks is 'true,' but may be 'bad'. The argument of 172 A-B, however, whether 'dialectical' or not, is totally irrelevant to this position. Whether certain persons were willing to make an illogical and futile compromise on the question or not, and whether they represented 'educated opinion' or not, is *nihil ad rem*. It is *not* the position of 'Protagoras' in the Speech, and Plato is merely confusing the issue by introducing an indefensible position which he had not to reply to, instead of an unassailable one he was bound to deal with. His motives for this substitution are a matter of conjecture, and Mr. Gillespie is free to form his; but he should recognise the facts.

To conclude, Mr. Gillespie's interpretation of the whole discussion appears to me to suffer from the same prejudice which has baffled attempts to analyse the *Theatetus* truly all

along: he continues to read the Speech in the light of the reply, and to accept Plato's official assurances that all is well with it, instead of noting the actual arguments of the Speech and comparing them with their *sot-disant* refutations.¹

In spite of this lingering prejudice, however, Mr. Gillespie's interpretation means a great declension from any fanatically Platonist position. He admits that the Protagoras of the Speech is not disposed of, and that philosophy has reason to remember the humanism of the genius who discovered that "in dealing with the problems of life we must ultimately rely on our judgments concerning things" (p. 491). It is vain to condemn this as 'relativism,' so long as you can neither deny the fact, nor explain how it is possible to pass from the human to the 'absolute' aspect of things.

¹ Another good example of the subtle distortions to which this method leads may be found on p. 489. In 178-179 'Socrates' is (irrelevantly) refuting the 'unqualified' Protagoreanism of the unexplained dictum and the unauthentic substitute propounded in 172 A, and incidentally showing that the anti-intellectualism of 167 A-C has not been understood. But Mr. Gillespie is led to describe the situation as being that "Protagoras had reduced the superiority of the wise to superiority in power. Socrates shows that this power rests on superiority in knowledge." In point of fact there is no reference in the text to the Speech, and no mention of 'power'; 'Socrates' simply ignores it and dogmatically reasserts that one man is 'wiser' than another (the why and how of which was precisely what the Speech had explained on Protagorean principles), and the demand of the Speech had been, not that the superiority of the wise should be 'reduced,' but that it should be *enhanced* (and paid for!), by being made practically efficacious. 'Protagoras' had declared plainly that mere superior *knowing* was not sufficient and that superior *doing* was the real aim both of moral instruction and statesmanship. To all this there is not the slightest reference in the Platonic reply, and yet Mr. Gillespie will not see that it is irrelevant and incomplete!