Commentary on Fine
Deborah De Chiara-Quenzer

In this commentary, my aim is twofold. One, to explain Professor Fine's thesis; two, to evaluate the paper both in terms of its merits and in regard to issues that need to be revisited.

I. Summary

Professor Fine's paper focuses on the discussion of Protagoreanism presented in Plato's *Theaetetus*. Professor Fine assumes that Plato's discussion of Protagoreanism is representative of the philosophy of the historical Protagoras. The paper examines two relativistic interpretations of the Protagorean position in the *Theaetetus*, one referred to as relativism about truth and the other referred to as perceptual relativism. Professor Fine attempts to demonstrate that both interpretations are inadequate. She presents an alternative interpretation of Protagoras' philosophy which she finds is superior to both relativism about truth and perceptual relativism. She calls her interpretation infallibilism.

Fine discusses three positions and one problem which are raised in the *Theaetetus* and which she believes are connected. I will list them in the order in which they appear in the text. One position is Theaetetus' definition of knowledge that knowledge is perception (T) (see 151d7-e7).\(^1\) Another position is the preliminary account given of Protagoras' doctrine that man is the measure of all things which is immediately elaborated as what

1. This is Theaetetus' second definition. The first appears at 146c7-d4. The Greek text referred to throughout the commentary is that edited by John Burnet, *Theaetetus in Platonis Opera*, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900).
appears for a person is for that person (P) (see 151e8-152a9). This position gives rise to what some, including Fine, say is the problem of conflicting appearances (152b1-7). This is the problem of two people perceiving the same object and having two different perceptions of that object. Specifically, we are told that two people are experiencing the same wind and are perceiving it differently in terms of its coldness. The final position is that the world is constantly changing and never is—the Heraclitean ontology of becoming (H) (152c8-153a4).

Fine believes that since the problem of appearances, that is, how the same thing can appear differently to two people, is a consequence of Protagoreanism, that is, whatever appears to that individual is to that individual, then an adequate interpretation of Protagoreanism must resolve the problem of appearances (this shall be called criterion one). Moreover, since the Heraclitean ontology is connected to Protagoreanism, Fine demands that an adequate interpretation of Protagoras' doctrine must be consistent with Heraclitean ontology (this shall be called criterion two). Thus according to Fine, the problem of appearances (A) must be resolved by an interpretation of Protagoreanism (P) which is consistent with Heraclitean ontology (H). (A) must be resolved by (P) which is consistent with (H). Should an interpretation of Protagoreanism resolve the problem of appearances, but not be consistent with Heraclitean ontology, then such an interpretation is not evaluated as adequate.

What we find in Professor Fine's paper is that both relativistic interpretations of Protagoras' philosophy which are rejected fulfill criterion one, that is, they resolve the problem of appearances. However, they both violate criterion two, that is, they conflict with Heraclitean ontology. Fine's infallibilistic interpretation of Protagoreanism is evaluated as superior because it fulfills both criteria. It not only is an interpretation which resolves the problem of appearances, but it also is consistent with Heraclitean ontology.

Let me now turn to the three interpretations of Protagoreanism discussed in Fine's paper. I will discuss Fine's view of what